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Dissertation

THE INFLUENCE OF THOMAS JEFFERSON'S DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES UPON ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S THINKING ON THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY

by

William McFerrin Stowe

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APPROVAL BY READERS

FIRST Richard M. Cameron
Professor of Church History

SECOND Edwin P. Booth
Professor of Historical Theology

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The life of Abraham Lincoln has been told and retold, written and re-written. Among this library of innumerable books not one attempts to deal with him as a social philosopher. There is no book which seeks to trace the school of thought and the individual thinker who had the greatest influence upon him. Many books have given a page or a chapter to this, but no scholar has turned to it as the central phase of his interest and writing. This dissertation is an attempt to fill the vacancy caused by this neglect. It is a study of the thinking of Lincoln on the subject of slavery, and seeks to show what ideas he selected from the Nation's treasury of thought.

The specific object of this work is to establish the fact found in the research that the thought of Abraham Lincoln upon the question of slavery was based primarily upon the democratic principles of Thomas Jefferson. A distinction must here be made between Jefferson's principles and the method he advocated for the establishing of these principles. Lincoln never did accept Jefferson's methods which looked to the State rather than the Federal government to execute his ideas. What Lincoln did accept from the hands of Jefferson was those democratic ideals which found their best and most

concise expression in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence.

> We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

This fact has been glimpsed by a number of biographers of Lincoln, but his place in the history of ideas has not been given. There has been a decided failure in understanding or interpreting Lincoln as a thinker. His work for civil liberties has been minimized. His radicalism has been forgotten.

> Abraham Lincoln has been appreciated hitherto altogether too exclusively as the preserver of the Union, too little as the sage, the savior, and the saint of a true social democracy. We have read his national significance far more in the light of his finished work as the preserver of the Union, far less as the interpreter and master craftsman in thought and action of social democracy. He set himself to the task and made it his life work to save the Union, but always with the wider, deeper, more comprehensive and far-reaching purpose of making and keeping the national government, which represented the Union, '<u>forever worthy of the saving</u>.' He valued the Union chiefly as the dutiful servant and facile instrument of democracy. He knew that democracy is always an experiment. He called it 'the faith of our fathers.' He called it 'a great and good work.' He knew and spoke of the heroic faith which called it into being. He lived in the mighty deeds already done to further its progress. And he gathered up the significance of the whole struggle to save the Union in the great thought of something necessary to be done that 'government of the people, by the people, and for the people' might not perish from the earth.[1]

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[1] George Croft Cell, "The Unfinished Work of Lincoln," in <u>Zion's Herald</u>, Feb. 7, 1934, p. 128.

What has caused this oversight of Lincoln's fundamental ideas? Why have his radical social ideals been minimized and his saving of the Union magnified? One explanation is that it is easier to study and to comprehend actions than it is thought. His actions were obvious; his thoughts more hidden. This is partially true but is not an adequate explanation. A more thoroughgoing reason is that in the war the majority of the people lost sight of the idea of keeping the Union worthy of the saving and only thought of the saving of it. That is why Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address was so severely criticised. It emphasized the former idea. Following the war the frightful cost in money and men to retain the Union became the main object of the thought of the people. Faith in humanity lapsed. Love of security superseded the love of democracy, and as always, reaction followed war. In this reaction Lincoln's radicalism was buried, and even until this day it is often the conservative who quotes Lincoln. Whereas, in Lincoln's own day such radicals as Karl Marx were his most ardent admirers, and the conservatives often shrank from his ideas. This dissertation will attempt to bring to the fore the radical social democracy of Lincoln and show that this was an inheritance from Thomas Jefferson.

In studying this problem sources which seemed relevant have been examined. First, a research in the general history of the United States was made, and from this the facts related to slavery were noted. Next, a study was made of the history of slavery in the United States in which special

attention was given to the history of the ideas about slavery. Then followed an investigation of the history of democratic ideas in America.

The research made on Abraham Lincoln was extensive. All the index cards in the Boston Public Library relating to Lincoln were examined and wherever they indicated any information upon this subject, the book or article was studied. All of the outstanding books on Lincoln were read as were many which are not so well known. Then followed a close study and re-study of Lincoln's own writings and addresses. From these was taken a list of those men to whom he acknowledged a debt for an idea or an expression, or those whom he often mentioned, or with whom he claimed to be in accord. This list furnished the names of George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Andrew Jackson, Daniel Webster, and Henry Clay. The Works of these men were studied as were their biographies. In this study every passage that seemed to throw light upon the origin of any of Abraham Lincoln's ideas was noted. From this research the ideas of this dissertation are taken.

The procedure to be followed in establishing the facts found in the research is: first, to give a survey of the early life of Lincoln and the influences affecting it until the year 1849. Next, to show that a definite change came over the thinking of Lincoln upon the question of slavery after the year 1849. Thirdly, to trace the

minor and the major influences upon Lincoln and to establish the fact that this change was primarily a return to the principles of Thomas Jefferson by a comparison of the slavery philosophy of Lincoln and Jefferson.

CHAPTER II

A SURVEY AND AN ESTIMATE OF THE OUTSTANDING BOOKS ON LINCOLN

There have been hundreds of books written upon various aspects of the life and actions of Abraham Lincoln. Nine stand out enough to deserve special notice and comment. These are the works by Nicolay and Hay, Herndon and Weik, Morse, Tarbell, Rothschild, Charnwood, Stephenson, Barton and Beveridge.

In 1890, John G. Nicolay and John Hay, private secretaries of Abraham Lincoln during his presidency, published a ten volume work which they called Abraham Lincoln, A History. This was the result of their association with Lincoln and of "twenty years of almost unremitting assiduity," in collecting materials and in writing. The object of the authors was to present Lincoln and the events surrounding his life in a candid and an unbiased way. This was accomplished to a large degree, and although the work is poorly proportioned, it is an invaluable source of knowledge for the student of Lincoln. This is especially true since Lincoln himself accepted Nicólay and Hay as trustworthy chroniclers and gave to them his permission for the writing of this work.

It was natural for the authors to concentrate their efforts upon the presidency of Lincoln as this was the most

notable period of his life, and also the time during which they knew him best. However, when they gave eight and one-third of the ten volumes to the life of Lincoln and to the events surrounding it after his election to the presidency, they by necessity neglected some elements of his earlier days which were of prime importance. Not only can the authors be accused of poor spatial division in dealing with the life of Lincoln, but also in the space given to Lincoln, himself, and that given to events and circumstances which surrounded him. Giving as much attention as they did to the historical background of their subject, a more appropriate name for their work would have been, Abraham Lincoln and His Times.

Nicolay and Hay offer little help in a search for the origin of the fundamental principles of the slavery thinking of Lincoln. This was not considered within the realm of their work and so omitted. They did, however, look upon the years 1849 to 1854, as a time of study and reflection --years of mental maturing. They were aware, also, of a change in Lincoln after 1854, and declared that the Peoria Address marked with unmistakable precision a "step in the second period of his intellectual development."[1] They acknowledged that this address was deepened by a more historical approach and strengthened by terse, concise logic. With all of these

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[1] Vol. I, p. 380.

clues, however, they failed to search beneath the surface for the great new power which they recognized in Lincoln after 1854. Therein lies the defect of this work in the light of the present study.

Some five years after the death of Abraham Lincoln, his former partner at law, William H. Herndon, began a biography of him. Active life at the bar, however, caused Herndon to delay the composition of this work for some twenty years, and by that time, being advanced in years, he did not feel equal to carrying this task alone. Therefore, he obtained the help of Jesse W. Weik in composing the book. In 1888, the work having been completed, it was copyrighted and came from the press bearing the title, Abraham Lincoln, The True Story of a Great Life.* This book arose from the nearly thirty year friendship between Lincoln and Herndon, and the twenty-two years of partnership at law. It was based on data gathered and selected by Herndon and the one aim was to present Lincoln as he was, omitting nothing that might discredit him and adding nothing to pay him honor.

"The object of this work," Herndon declared, "is to deal with Mr. Lincoln individually and domestically; as lawyer, as citizen, as statesman. . . .I have no theory of

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* This dissertation will use only the name of Herndon in citing this work as his spirit and attitudes dominate to such a degree that even Weik spoke of it as Herndon's work.

his life to establish or destroy."[2] With this object in mind, Herndon wrote an excellent biography. Its virtue is not in its form of expression nor in its unity, for at both of these points it is not especially strong. Its value lies in its wealth of source material, without which much of the true Lincoln would have been lost to posterity. In its rather rambling form it unfolds the inner recesses of Lincoln's life to its readers, but in consonance with its aim, no interpretation is attempted. As fine as Herndon's work is, therefore, it failed in dealing with the mind and thought of Lincoln and gave little space to an interpretation of his new source of power after 1854. He clearly recognized a new Lincoln from that time forward, and does intimate a fundamental change in his thought but failed to dig out its roots for examination.

This biography is of inestimable value to anyone seeking to know Lincoln, and a grave injustice was done when it was discredited for years. It has again risen to its proper place, however, and there it will stay in the future as research has proven Herndon to be an accurate historian.

John T. Morse wrote a two volume biography of Lincoln to be included in the American Statesmen series. This work comes within a section of this series which has as its major interest the period of the Civil War. Since this is true, the majority of the pages of the two volumes

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[2] Op. Cit., Vol. I, p. viii.

deal with Lincoln during the war. Only one hundred and sixty pages are given to the life of Lincoln before his election to the presidency. Therefore, little could be said of the development of the thinking of Lincoln. Morse did not even consider the Peoria Address of Lincoln worthy of a pause and his only remark concerning it was that it was brilliantly successful, "if the highly colored account of Mr. Herndon may be trusted."[3] He failed to speak of any change which came over Lincoln and as to the thought of Lincoln, it is absolutely ignored.

As biography, this work is helpful, but it is of no significance to one seeking to trace the deeper elements and thoughts of the mind of Lincoln.

Among the more popular works on Lincoln is that by Ida M Tarbell entitled, The Life of Abraham Lincoln Drawn from Original Sources and Containing Many Speeches, Letters, and Telegrams Hitherto Unpublished, Illustrated With Many Reproductions From Original Photographs, Paintings, etc. Parts of this work were published first as magazine articles and later found book form, which has been republished and revised several times since its original appearance in 1900. The previously unpublished source materials for this book were gathered under the auspices of "McClure's Magazine." The collection perceptibly enriched the then existing

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[3] Vol. I, p. 95.

Lincolniana. This work is a worthy one in many respects.

Tarbell, from these newly found materials, felt herself adequately equipped to deny the authenticity of a number of the statements of William H. Herndon. In more recent days she has been found to be in error rather than he, and this has to some degree discredited her work.

For the present study her work offers little or nothing original. She had no special interest in the thought life of Lincoln and so her book is barren at this point.

Lincoln, Master of Men, A Study in Character, by Alonzo Rothschild was published in 1906. This is a splendid interpretation of Lincoln in the field of character study. Its aim, which it accomplishes well, is to present Lincoln as a leader of men throughout his life. It begins with "A Sampson of the Backwoods," in which the physical strength and mental determination of Lincoln are stressed, and his early position of leadership established. From this start the book travels along the same line picking up examples of his masterful ability as it goes through Lincoln's life.

Rothschild realized that the Lincoln of 1842, and of 1862, were vastly different, but this difference he attributed to that spirit of controversy which had aroused the whole nation in 1862.[4] He did not grasp the full

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[4] p. 78.

depths or significance of this change in Lincoln, nor did he see behind it any great philosophy. He considered Lincoln's "Peoria Address" as an unusually strong utterance, but only attributed it to Lincoln's indignation over the "moral, no less than by the political obliquity of Douglas's course."[5] Rothschild makes no attempt to trace the processes of Lincoln's mind, and admits in his philosophy only the desire to be a leader of men.

During the World War there came from the press a biography of Abraham Lincoln written by an English nobleman, Lord Charnwood. This work has the advantages of being from an unprejudiced mind and from a person standing on the outside looking on as an observer. This treatise lacks, however, some of the ingrained understanding of American politics necessary for a complete picture of the background against which Lincoln arose. In spite of this defect, the book has been exceedingly popular and well deserves notice among the best works on Lincoln. It is very readable and also historically accurate.

Lord Charnwood went into the thought life of Lincoln much more deeply than have most of the writers on this subject. With conciseness but with thoroughness, he outlines the content of his slavery thought, but only after making a careful distinction between Lincoln's thought prior

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[5] p. 88.

to 1849, and succeeding 1854. He found in these years a deepening and a developing of the mind of Lincoln which was a product of "long and deep and anxious thought." Having recognized the period of quiet study and thought which produced a new Lincoln, mentally, the author saw in this change a man "free from ambiguity of thought or faltering of will."[6] But after showing the rise of a new mode of thought, and after recounting the significant elements in this new philosophy, Lord Charnwood stops, leaving completely unanswered the question, from whence came the thoughts of this new mind, and the power of this new man? Charnwood is excellent up to this point, but then deserts the question of major importance to the present study.

Nathaniel Wright Stephenson published in 1922, 1924, Lincoln, An Account of His Personal Life Especially of Its Springs of Action as Revealed and Deepened by the Ordeal of War. The title forecasts the general trend of the book, which is to consider Lincoln's development in leadership ability during the War. The title is misleading, however, in its indication that a search is to be made for the deepest springs of action in Lincoln. Such a search, by necessity, must give more than three pages to Lincoln's "Peoria Address," which is admittedly "a landmark in his career," and a summation of "all his long, slow development

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[6] p. 122.

in political science," and the laying of "the abiding foundation of everything he thought thereafter."[7] With these remarks and a few quotations from the address, Stephenson, rushes on to reach his major interest, Lincoln and the war.

This book contains much good material and deserves high ranking among the works on Lincoln, but it does not attempt to trace the source of his political philosophy, nor to find the deepest springs of action of his career. Its title is misleading, but forgetting this and accepting the book for what it is, Stephenson has made a definite contribution to the understanding of Lincoln.

In 1925, William E. Barton published his two volume work, The Life of Abraham Lincoln. This is a very readable and an accurate account of the life of Lincoln, and well deserves to be considered among the best. Barton understands the mind of Lincoln better than most writers, but even he does not give a very good explanation of his slavery philosophy, and makes absolutely no attempt to trace its origin. Barton did recognize the definite change which came in the thinking of Lincoln about slavery after 1849. Barton, however, did not comprehend the depths of this change, nor the basis of the new mode of thought. He apprehended the break of Lincoln with the old conservative

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[7] p. 77.

Whig slavery compromises, but did not intimate the source of the new thought. Barton understood to some degree the importance of the years between 1849, and 1854, but did not comprehend the source of power which made these years so important. He attributed Lincoln's re-entrance into politics in 1854, to a mighty impulse of his own conscience and to political opportunism. Both of these are true, but they lack greatly being the whole truth. Barton's dealing with Lincoln is purely historical and fails almost completely philosophically.

The one place where Barton attempts to enter into the thought process of Lincoln is on the question of labor. Here, the author comes much closer to Lincoln's beliefs on this subject than have most writers, and yet he leaves the depths of this subject unplumbed. Historically, Barton is good, but philosophically he is very inadequate.

One of the best biographies of Abraham Lincoln is the two volume work written by Albert J. Beveridge in 1928.# This work is incomplete in that it carries the life of Lincoln only to 1858. The death of Beveridge interrupted this splendid work at that point. In dealing biographically with Lincoln, this work is unsurpassed. It is thoroughly scholarly, with a vast amount of research lying behind it.

All references in this dissertation to Beveridge are to this life of Lincoln.

It has the added advantage of presenting the environment as well as the man.

Beveridge did a great service to all Lincoln scholars in his re-affirmation of the worth and general accuracy of the Life of Lincoln, by Herndon and Weik. This two volume work by Lincoln's law partner and another, had for years been discredited as inaccurate and unworthy. Beveridge proved these accusations to be false. This re-affirmation adds to the scope and the richness of the Lincolniana materials for they come from one who knew him well.

As great as this work is in a biographical way, it is seriously lacking in its interpretation of the major philosophical principles in the thinking of Abraham Lincoln on the question of slavery after the year 1854. As an accurate historian must, Beveridge realized that a great change was evidenced in the thought of Lincoln after that year, but he did little in the way of tracing this change and his interpretation of it seems faulty. Beveridge recognized some of the reasons for this metamorphosis such as Lincoln's failure in Congress, his reading of slavery works, and the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, but he leaves unanswered the question, from whence came this change? He failed to delve into Lincoln's new mode of thought except in a very superficial way.

Arising from the failure to study the thought of

Lincoln more closely, Beveridge fell into the oft repeated error of interpreting Lincoln almost completely as a nationalist. He placed him in the footsteps of John Marshall, of whom he had written a biography, and for whom his admiration was so great that it prejudiced his outlook to some degree. He wrote the life of Lincoln with the view of making it, as he expressed it, "a companion piece to the Marshall, continuing the institutional interpretation of America and weaving it about the life and career of Lincoln as he had tried to weave the first part of such an interpretation around the life and career of Marshall."[8] Lincoln just will not fit into that mold, and so Beveridge falls far short in his interpretation of the thought of Abraham Lincoln. The distrust of Marshall in democracy, and the implicit trust of Lincoln in it are minimized by Beveridge and their nationalistic similarity over emphasized. Beveridge failed to realize from what opposite extremes this nationalism arose in the two men. In all of his writings which have come down to the present day, Lincoln mentioned Marshall only twice. Certainly he would have made more references to the man he was following. It must be concluded, therefore, that the searcher must look elsewhere than to John Marshall for the father of the slavery philosophy of Abraham Lincoln, and that fine

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[8] Vol. I, p. v.

as the biography of Beveridge is on the life of Lincoln, it woefully lacks in its interpretation of his mind and thought.

In conclusion, it may be said that none of the outstanding writers on Lincoln took as his major interest the political philosophy of Lincoln as it found expression in his slavery thought. Those that did touch this point did it in a rather superficial way, and none went to the depths of the problem. Many of these books were helpful in the present study, but none of them covered the field of Lincoln's slavery thinking as this dissertation plans to do.

CHAPTER III

LINCOLN PRIOR TO 1849

Abraham Lincoln was born February 12, 1809, in Hardin county, Kentucky. His father, Thomas, and his mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln were of middle class stock, descendants of the pioneer movement of the "Middle Region," which starting from New York and Pennsylvania some seventy-five years before had descended the valley of Virginia and had scattered over the Piedmont section of Virginia and North Carolina, and a generation later had pushed on into Kentucky and Tennessee. "It was a region mediating between New England and the South. . . .It was democratic and non-sectional. . . .It was typical of the Modern United States."[1] It was the birth place of American democracy, and of its three leaders, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and Abraham Lincoln.

The home into which Abraham Lincoln was born was one of poverty and ignorance. The influence of his father upon Abraham seems to have been slight. They never were especially close either in ideas or affections. Thomas Lincoln "was proverbially slow of movement, mentally and physically; was careless, inert and dull; . . .was

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[1] Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History, pp. 27, 28.

inoffensively quiet and peaceable."[2]

> At the time of his marriage to Nancy Hanks he could neither read nor write; but his wife, who was fitted with more education, and was otherwise his mental superior, taught him, it is said, to write his name and to read--at least, he was able in later years to spell his way slowly through the Bible.[3]

Great was the influence of his mother upon the life of Abraham Lincoln. Nancy Hanks Lincoln was the illegitimate daughter of a rough, but not unusual woman of the frontier.[4] Nancy, however, was an unusual woman with remarkable judgment and fine character. Although she died when Abraham was only ten years old her influence upon him was great and lasting. In 1851, in speaking of her, he said that however unpromising the early surroundings of his mother may have been, she was highly intelligent by nature, had a strong memory, acute judgment, and was cool and heroic.[5]

While Abraham was still a boy, Thomas moved with his family a number of times. He made a meager living by farming and by working occasionally as a carpenter. Whenever possible, Thomas spent his time in hunting and the Lincoln family lived on what he killed. In 1816, Thomas

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[2] William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. 11, p. 8.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Albert J. Beveridge, Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1, p. 14.

[5] William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 10.

moved his family into the uncut forests of Indiana, where they lived until 1830. Soon after moving to Indiana, Nancy Lincoln died, and in 1819, Thomas Lincoln was remarried to a widow of thirty-five, and she and her children came to live in the wilds of Indiana. She brought a reformation into the Lincoln household for she was energetic and tidy. She and Abraham soon became devoted and hers was ever a constructive influence. She encouraged his ambitions and often acted as the arbitrator between him and his father, for Thomas saw little good in his son's reading and making speeches when he should have been plowing or working as a carpenter. Abraham never enjoyed manual labor.

Before leaving Kentucky, Lincoln began his meager education at Knob Creek, where with his sister, Sarah, he attended for a few weeks the school of Zachariah Riney. Later he spent a short time in the A. B. C. school of Caleb Hazel. The two sessions would not total over three months and Abe had no books. During the winter of 1818-1819, in Indiana "Abe was in his tenth year, and his stepmother, awake to the importance of an education, made a way for him to attend school."[6] At the close of this training, however, he could not write well and knew little about reading. Not until he was fifteen or sixteen did he again attend school and then the school was four miles away. It

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[6] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 31.

was during this term that Lincoln began to show his ability as a student, and the fire of ambition to learn began to burn in his soul. He excelled in spelling, penmanship, reading, and soon began to write poetry and compositions. His text books during this period were the Bible, Webster's or Dilworth's Spelling Book, Pike's Arithmetic, and a song book. This term was the end of the formal schooling of Abraham Lincoln except in 1826. When under William Sweeney he studied for less than a year. In speaking in later years, of his formal education Lincoln declared:

> Abraham now thinks that the aggregate of all his schooling did not amount to one year. He was never in a college or academy as a student, and never inside of a college or academy building till he had a law license.[7]
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> There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education. Of course, when I came of age I did not know much. Still, somehow, I could read, write and cipher to the rule of three, but that was all. I have not been to school since. The little advance I now have upon this store of education, I have picked up from time to time under the pressure of necessity.[8]

Although Lincoln declares that there was "nothing to excite ambition for education," he did have this ambition keenly. His cousin, John Hanks in later years told:

> When Abe and I returned to the house from work he would go to the cupboard, snatch a piece of corn bread, sit down, take a book, cock his legs up as

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[7] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. VIII, pp. 214, 215.

[8] Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 262.

> high as his head, and read. We grubbed, plowed, mowed, and worked together barefooted in the field. Whenever Abe had a chance in the field while at work, or at the house, he would stop and read.[9]

Lincoln began to read all the books that he could borrow in the neighborhood. The books were few in number and so he read and re-read them, remembering much of what he read. Often he would copy some especially striking passage and memorize it. Some of the books he read were: Robinson Crusoe, Pilgrim's Progress, Sinbad the Sailor, Aesop's Fables, the Bible, Bailey's Etymological Dictionary, Grimshaw's History of the United States, the Revised Laws of Indiana, Scott's Lessons in Elocution, Selections of Pieces in Prose and Verse for the Improvement of Youth in Reading and Speaking, Kentucky Preceptor, Weems's Lives of Washington and of Franklin.[10]

Herndon in speaking of Lincoln said, "From a mental standpoint he was one of the most energetic young men of his day."[11] He had an insatiable desire to learn.

> The intellectual fire burned slowly, but with a steady and intense glow. Although denied the requisite training of the school-room, he was none the less competent to cope with those who had undergone that discipline. No one had a more retentive memory. If he read or heard a good thing it never escaped him. His powers of concentration were intense, and in the ability through analysis to strip bare

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[9] Herndon, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 40, 41.

[10] Albert J. Beveridge, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 70, 73.

[11] Herndon, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 39.

a proposition he was unexcelled. His thoughtful and investigating mind dug down after ideas, and never stopped till bottom facts were reached.[12]

Lincoln once described his mind in the following words: "I am slow to learn, and slow to forget that which I have learned. My mind is like a piece of steel--very hard to scratch anything on it, and almost impossible after you get it there to rub it out."[13] These traits were evident in Lincoln as a school boy, as well as in later years.

To the influence on Abraham Lincoln of his home and his school must be added a third essential point, the influence of the frontier upon him. To understand Lincoln and his political philosophy is impossible without a consideration of this point. The great West left its indelible mark upon those that it touched, and Lincoln was no exception. The vast out-of-doors; the deep, cool streams; the great virgin forests; the expanse of the free land; were the cradle of democracy. Turner says of the western frontier:

> She gave to the world such types as the farmer Thomas Jefferson, with his Declaration of Independence, his statute for religious toleration, and his purchase of Louisiana. She gave us Andrew Jackson, that fierce Tennessee spirit who broke down the traditions of conservative

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[12] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 41.

[13] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 232.

> rule, swept away the privacies and privileges of officialdom, and, like a Gothic leader, opened the temple of the nation to the populace. She gave us Abraham Lincoln, whose gaunt frontice form and gnarled, massive hand told of the conflict with the forest, whose grasp of the ax-handle of the pioneer was no firmer than his grasp of the helm of the ship of state as it breasted the seas of civil war.[14]

"American democracy was born of no theorist's dream; it was not carried in the Susan Constant to Virginia, nor in the Mayflower to Plymouth. It came out of the American forest, and it gained new strength each time it touched a new frontier."[15] It is true that:

> Among the pioneers one man was as good as his neighbor. He had the same chance; conditions were simple and free. Economic equality fostered political equality. An optimistic and buoyant belief in the worth of the plain people, a devout faith in man prevailed in the West. Democracy became almost the religion of the pioneer. He held with passionate devotion the idea that he was building under freedom a new society, based on self-government, and for the welfare of the average man.[16]

Lincoln's thinking and action ever showed the influence of the frontier. The following description by Turner of the traits of the frontier in practically every particular could be used in describing the character and thinking of Abraham Lincoln.

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[14] Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History, p. 268.

[15] Ibid., p. 293.

[16] Ibid., pp. 274, 275.

> That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for the good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes from freedom--these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier.[17]

The self-made man was the Western man's ideal. He was what any enterprising young man might become. The idea was sown deep in the soul of Lincoln who expressed it when only a boy in school in the following couplet:

> 'Good boys to their books apply
> Will all be great men by and by.'[18]

Out of his wilderness experience, out of the freedom of his opportunities, he fashioned this philosophy--the philosophy of the frontier. The inherent worth and possibility of every man was thus forged upon the heart of Abraham Lincoln while he was still a boy, and in later years it was this theory that lifted him above the common mass and placed him as the great exponent of the Declaration of Independence.

The early frontier was characterized by its enthusiasm for politics. This interest was augmented greatly by the contest for the presidency between John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson. "For three whole years (1825-1828) a contest, characterized by unprecedented

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[17] Ibid., p. 37.

[18] Herndon, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 38.

virulence. . . .stirred the country into keen partisan excitement."[19] Young Lincoln, too, must have felt the heat of this conflict for the majority of the people in Carter township, Indiana, where he then lived, were National Republicans, but he and his family were Democrats and followers of Andrew Jackson. It was during this period that a change of far reaching importance began to come over Lincoln. Two of Lincoln's older friends, William Jones and William Wood, were staunch Republicans, and both subscribed to Republican newspapers, The Louisville Journal, and certain Cincinnati papers. Lincoln read these papers and absorbed much he read including the speeches of Henry Clay who had come to the fore as the leader of the Whig party, which had succeeded the old National Republican party.[20] The change that came over Lincoln at this time is described by Dennis Hanks, his cousin, who lived with the Lincolns. 'Abe turned Whig in 1827-28--think Col. Jones made him a Whig don't know it. . . .always Loved Henry Clay's Speaches I think was the Cause Mostly.'[21] It is not surprising that Lincoln was attracted by Clay for he "had brought with him into politics an imagination for great schemes, an ardor

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[19] Woodrow Wilson, Division and Re-Union, p. 19.

[20] Albert J. Beveridge, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 96, 97.

[21] Ibid., Vol. I. p. 98.

for progress on the great scale, a quick sympathy with the plainer sort of strong, sagacious men, and a personal force of initiative. . ."[22]

Wilson sums up the principles of the Whig Party in the following paragraph:

> It seemed to speak again with the voice of the old Federalists; for it leaned as a whole towards a liberal construction of the constitutional powers of Congress; it believed in the efficacy of legislation to effect reforms and check disorders in the economic life of the people. Its most conspicuous leaders were committed to the policy of large expenditures for internal improvements and to the policy of protective tariffs; and it contained, and for the most part sympathized with, the men who had fought for the renewal of the charter of the Bank of the United States.[23]

This position was certainly more in line with what Lincoln had experienced throughout life, for it seemed to offer means of communication, money of value rather than the worthless local currency, and internal improvements; and these three things seemed worthy of his support. In the year 1860, Lincoln spoke of his membership in the Whig party to another old Whig in the following terms: "Like you I belonged to the Whig party from its origin to its close."[24]

Lincoln neither at that time nor later said much

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[22] Woodrow Wilson, op. cit., pp. 26, 27.

[23] Ibid., pp. 113, 114.

[24] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 96.

of this change, but it was a definite one, and when he left Indiana in 1830, he was a Whig, and ready to enlist under the banner of 'Harry of the West', his "beau ideal of a statesman."

Soon after helping his family make a home in Illinois, Abraham left this home and in July 1831, he settled in New Salem in Sangamon County, Illinois. Here he found new fuel to feed his burning desire to learn. He began to read more voraciously than ever. Mentor Graham, a school teacher, had told him that grammar was indispensable to one who wished to advance politically and socially, so Lincoln walked six miles to the home of John Vance to borrow Kirkham's Grammar. He mastered this book and applied its teachings throughout the years to come. During this period he also read Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire; Rollin's Ancient History; the poetry of Burns, Shakespeare, and Byron; American Military Biography; the lives of Washington, Jefferson, Clay, Webster and something of Jackson and Lord Nelson: and finally, the works of the philosophers, Voltaire, Volney, and Paine.[25] These books and especially the works of Voltaire, Volney, and Paine, left lasting impressions upon him. John T. Stuart, a lawyer, and John Calhoun, a surveyor, urged Lincoln to study law, but it was several years before he became a lawyer.

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[25] Albert J. Beveridge, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 135, 138, 139.

In 1832, at the age of twenty-three, Lincoln became a candidate for the office of one of the Representatives to the General Assembly of the State of Illinois. In the announcement of his candidacy, he stated: "I am in favor of a national bank. I am in favor of the internal improvement system, and a high protective tariff."[26] These were the principles of Henry Clay and the Whig party. Lincoln spoke of this election in an autobiographical sketch written in 1860, in the following way:

> Returning from the campaign (the Black Hawk War), and encouraged by his great popularity among his immediate neighbors, he the same year ran for the legislature, and was beaten,--his own precinct, however, casting its votes 277 for and 7 against him--and that, too, while he was an avowed Clay man, and the precinct the autumn afterward giving a majority of 115 to General Jackson over Mr. Clay. This was the only time Abraham was ever beaten on a direct vote of the people.[27]

Although Lincoln was defeated in this first candidacy for public office, two years later he was successful when he again ran for the State Legislature. No campaign statement of this election remains, but it seems certain that his views were those of Clay and the Whigs. During this session on all issues he upheld Whig principles, but as party lines were not as firmly established as they soon became, he voted for his friends, whether Whigs or Democrats,

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[26] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. II, p. 1.

[27] Ibid., Vol. VIII, p. 218.

for various offices.

Lincoln in his Autobiography gives a short resumé of the next few years of his life.

> The election of 1834 came, and he, Lincoln, was then elected to the legislature by the highest vote cast for any candidate. Major John T. Stuart, then in full practice of the law, was also elected. During the canvass, in a private conversation he encouraged Abraham (to) study law. After the election he borrowed books of Stuart, took them home with him, and went at it in good earnest. He studied with nobody. He still mixed in the surveying (a job he accepted only after being reassured that it would interfere in no wise with his Whig principles or his expression of them.[28]) To pay board and clothing bills when the legislature met, the law-books were dropped, but were taken up again at the end of the session. He was reelected in 1836, 1838, 1840. In the autumn of 1836, he obtained a law license, and on April 15, 1837, removed to Springfield and commenced the practice--his old friend Stuart taking him into partnership....
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> In 1838 and 1840, Mr. Lincoln's party voted for him as Speaker, but being in the minority he was not elected. After 1840 he declined a reelection to the legislature. He was on the Harrison electoral ticket in 1840, and on that of Clay in 1844, and spent much time and labor in both those canvasses.[29]

From 1844 until 1846, Lincoln worked steadily and skilfully to obtain the Whig nomination to the United States Congress. His greatest claim to it was that other leading Whigs had held this office, and that "Turn about is fair play."[30] Lincoln received the nomination and the election,

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28 William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 3.

29 Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. VIII, pp. 219, 220.

30 Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 69.

and in December 1847, took his seat in the lower house of the United States Congress. At the end of this term of office in March 1849, Lincoln had little to show to his credit. As a Congressman, Lincoln was not successful.

Throughout the session Lincoln voted with the Whigs on every party issue, and made the serious mistake of taking upon himself an attack on the Democratic administration and thereby the War with Mexico which was then in progress. This attack on the war was a good Whig doctrine, but it happened that Lincoln had become so enticed with national Whig ideas that he had forgotten that the Illinois Whigs differed with their party on this point. They had sent some of their best leaders to the war. By this speech, Lincoln practically ruined his political prestige that he had so carefully built for fifteen years.

This one blunder at so crucial a point in Lincoln's political career is an amazing thing, for it was the first and last time in his life that Lincoln disregarded the will of the people who had elected him to office. This regard for the wishes of the public was not because Lincoln lacked conviction of his own, but because he so thoroughly believed in democracy that he believed that an official should be governed by the will of those who had elected him. In one of his earliest political utterances, (1836), Lincoln asserted that "as their representative, I shall be

governed by their will on all subjects upon which I have the means of knowing what their will is. . ."[31] This principle never left him, except this one time, and many of his actions as president can be explained by this attitude.

Lincoln was unusually skilled in being able to read what was going on in the minds of the people. Horace White in his remarks in the introduction of Herndon's book writes: "Nobody had had more experience in that way, nobody knew better than he what was passing in the minds of the people."[32] Lincoln ever held his finger upon the pulse of public opinion, and his one neglect to do this stood in his way for years to come.

A short time before the end of this term as Congressman, Lincoln appears in a new role. Having failed to be reelected he entered his application for the office of Commissioner of the General Office. Many of his Whig friends in Illinois had urged him to take this step. Lincoln soon lost heart in the contest, however, when he found that he was hedged about by many other applicants from his own state.[33]

During his term in Congress, in 1848, Lincoln took

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[31] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 8.

[32] William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 21.

[33] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 299.

an active part in the nomination of General Taylor for the Presidency and also for his election after his nomination. He spoke several times in Maryland and then made a tour through New England in support of Taylor. Herndon says:

> It is evident from all the contemporaneous reports, that Mr. Lincoln made a marked impression on all his audiences. Their attention was drawn at once to his striking figure; they enjoyed his quaintness and humor; and they recognized his logical power and his novel way of putting things.[34]

Herndon, goes on to say, however, that ". . .so far as his points are given in the public journals he did not rise at any time above partisanship, and he gave no sign of the great future which awaited him as a political antagonist, a master of language, and a leader of men."[35] Lincoln had "not begun to treat broad principles in the 1848 campaign."[36]

This survey of the political principles of Abraham Lincoln from his youth until his retirement from the United States Congress shows a man of personal political ambitions, and little more. It shows a man who was devoted to the conservative principles of the Whig party, and who had never found occasion to rise above these principles on any great issue. It shows a man who had never sunk his roots into the rich soil and the firm foundations of the

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[34] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 286.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 294.

democratic principles upon which the American government is founded.

A study of Lincoln's attitude towards slavery prior to 1849, is interesting. Lincoln was born in a state which permitted slavery. However, in the section of Kentucky in which he lived, during his early years there were comparatively few slaves. For years after moving to Indiana, Lincoln had but few contacts with slavery. Likely the question of the moral right of one man to hold another as his property was never brought forcibly to him until he read Grimshaw's History of the United States. This was an unusual history in that it strongly presented the views of the author upon certain controversial subjects. He strongly expressed his opposition to slavery, and throughout the volume, the reader is not permitted to lose sight of "the shackle and the last." Such a strong expression must have made its mark upon the mind of the youth who had had few opportunities to see negroes in slavery and so form an idea upon the subject.

In the year 1828, Lincoln, then a boy of nineteen, was hired by James Gentry to help float a flatboat loaded with produce to New Orleans. While tied to shore not far above New Orleans the boat was attacked by a group of negroes, but they were soon driven off by Lincoln and his colleague. This episode was remembered by Lincoln in latter

years, but seemed to have had little influence one way or the other upon his attitude towards slavery.[37]

At the age of twenty-one, Lincoln made a second trip to New Orleans in the company of his cousin, John Hanks and one other man. Herndon writes of this trip in the following paragraph:

> In New Orleans, for the first time Lincoln beheld the true horrors of human slavery. He saw 'negroes in chains--whipped and scourged.' Against this inhumanity his sense of right and justice rebelled, and his mind and conscience were awakened to a realization of what he had often heard and read. No doubt, as one of his companions has said, 'Slavery ran the iron into him then and there.' One morning in their rambles over the city the trio passed a slave auction. A vigorous and comely mulatto girl was being sold. She underwent a thorough examination at the hands of the bidders; they pinched her flesh and made her trot up and down the room like a horse, to show how she moved, and in order, as the auctioneer said, that the 'bidders might satisfy themselves' whether the article they were offering to buy was sound or not. The whole thing was so revolting that Lincoln moved away from the scene with a deep feeling of 'unconquerable hate.' Bidding his companions follow him he said, 'By God, boys, let's get away from this. If ever I get a chance to hit that thing (meaning slavery), I'll hit it hard. This incident was furnished me in 1865, by John Hanks. I have also heard Mr. Lincoln refer to it himself.[38]

As far as the records show, Lincoln never spoke of this to anyone except Herndon and as it was over twenty years after this incident before Lincoln showed much con-

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[37] Albert J. Beveridge, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 88.

[38] Op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 67, 68.

cern about slavery, it seems probable that Herndon overemphasized its importance to Lincoln. Without a doubt, Lincoln was opposed to slavery from this time forward and held the hope that it would some day end. He, however, did not become the active opponent of the extension of slavery until after his retirement from Congress and after several years of thought and study on the question.

Beginning about the year 1830, slavery agitation was augmented by the renewed activities of the Abolitionists. By 1835 and 1836, the matter was heatedly debated in the United States Senate, and the legislatures of the various Southern states began to pass resolutions in protest of this agitation. These states sent copies of their resolutions to the legislatures of the Northern states for their approval. Some of the Northern states did give their approval to these resolutions; others remained quiet upon the issue. The Illinois state legislature faced this issue and by a vote of seventy-seven to six expressed its sympathy with the Southern states. Lincoln was among the six who voted "nay."[39] Six weeks later, on Friday, March 3, 1837, Lincoln lifted his voice for his first legislative utterance against slavery. With Dan Stone, another representative from Sangamon County, he entered his protest against the resolution passed by his fellow legislators. The

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[39] Albert J. Beveridge, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 191, 192.

protest read in part:

> They (Lincoln and Stone) believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy, but that the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate its evils.
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> They believe that the Congress of the United States has no power under the Constitution to interfere with the institution of slavery in the different states.
>
> They believe that the Congress of the United States has the power, under the Constitution, to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, but that the power ought not to be exercised, unless at the request of the people of the district.[40]

It was during this same period of strife over the rise of the Abolitionists that Elijah Lovejoy, a young Presbyterian minster and editor and an ardent Abolitionist, was killed by a mob in Alton, Illinois. About the same time mobs arose in St. Louis and in Mississippi to claim their victims. Lincoln, in an address delivered before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois, dealt with these conditions. With his usual caution he avoided the scene close at home except for one casual reference to it, and dealt with those in St. Louis and in Mississippi. He centered this address not around the question of slavery and Abolition, but rather in a condemnation of the mob spirit that has caused the riots. The danger he saw facing the Union was within, but not from slavery but from

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[40] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. II, pp. 26, 27.

the spirit of the mob, which caused people "to trample on the blood of his father, and to tear the charter of his own and his children's liberty."[41] He did not mention Lovejoy by name and likely felt little sympathy towards him for at this time Lincoln condemned the Abolitionists as much as he did slavery. He believed one to be evil, the other an unnecessary arousal of more evil.

After the death of Lovejoy, the Illinois Abolition Society made some progress and their petitions against slavery began to reach the Legislature. The question was further augmented when a controversy arose between the governors of Maine and Georgia. The governor of Maine refused to deliver two citizens of that state to the Georgia authorities to be tried on the charge of abduction of a slave from Savannah. The governor of Georgia sent copies of the correspondence between himself and the governor of Maine to the other states. It was referred to the Illinois Legislature and a committee of that body made a careful and unanimous report.

> The Committee expressed 'deep regret' that citizens of free States should interfere 'in manner' with the rights of citizens of slave States. 'Said committee consider the holding of slaves as a constitutional privilege,' and any interference therewith a violation of a right which ought to be held as sacred as any other portion of the Constitution.'

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[41] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 20.

> 'The cause of the abolitionists,' the Committee charged, was conducted with 'the intemperate zeal of misguided philanthropists,' the practical effect of which was to harden rather than ameliorate the condition of the slaves. It was too bad that 'such questions should be agitated to distract the peace and quiet of the Nation.' Until the Governor of Maine explains his course, the Committee hesitates to condemn that State as willing and disposed to encourage a policy (abolition) which ought to be viewed as a moral and political pestilence' and which, if encouraged, would finally 'spread devastation and ruin over the land.'[42]

Lincoln did not make any protest against this report and as Beveridge says, "they stated his views with exactitude, albeit he took no part in the heated debate that again arose over the subject."[43] Herndon, who very early became an abolitionist explains Lincoln's conservatism in the following way:

> It is not surprising, I think, that Lincoln should have viewed this New England importation with mingled suspicion and alarm. Abstractly, and from the standpoint of conscience, he abhorred slavery. But, born in Kentucky, and surrounded as he was by slave-holding influences, absorbing their prejudices and following in their line of thought, it is not strange, I repeat, that he failed to estimate properly the righteous indignation and unrestrained zeal of a Yankee Abolitionist.[44]

In the year 1841, Lincoln saw a group of slaves which made a definite impression upon him, and which he

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[42] Albert J. Beveridge, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 246.

[43] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 247.

[44] William J. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 169.

spoke of fifteen years later.[45] He declared that the sight of them was a continuous torment to him. The slaves were chained together and "in this condition they were being separated forever from the scenes of their childhood, their friends, their fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters, and many of them from their wives and children, and going into perpetual slavery. . ." The most amazing thing about it to Lincoln at the time was that amid these distressing circumstances "they were the most cheerful and apparently happy creatures on board."[46]

The immaturity of the thinking of Lincoln on the question of slavery in 1845, is obvious in a letter he wrote to Williamson Durly, an Abolitionist or Liberty man. Lincoln stated:

> I perhaps ought to say that individually I never was much interested in the Texas question. I never could see much good to come to annexation, inasmuch as they were already a free republican people on our own model. On the other hand, I never could very clearly see how the annexation would augment the evil of slavery. It always seemed to me that slaves would be taken there in about equal numbers, with or without annexation. And if more were taken because of annexation, still there would be just so many the fewer left where they were taken from. It is possibly true, to some extent, that with annexation, some slaves may be sent to Texas and continued in slavery that otherwise might have

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[45] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. IX, p. 190.

[46] Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 196.

> been liberated. To whatever extent this may be true, I think annexation an evil. I hold it to be a paramount duty of us in the free States, due to the Union of the States, and perhaps to liberty itself (paradox though it may seem) to let the slavery of the other States alone; while, on the other hand, I hold it to be equally clear that we should never knowingly lend ourselves, directly or indirectly, to prevent that slavery from dying a natural death, to find new places for it to live in, when it can no longer exist in the old. Of course, I am not now considering what would be our duty in cases of insurrection among the slaves.[47]

The Lincoln who speaks in this letter is a conservative Whig with conservative principles concerning the question of slavery. He is a man who stands between two extremes realizing both are wrong, but with no strong conviction of what is right.

In 1847, Abraham Lincoln's convictions about the evil of slavery had not reached a point which prevented him from accepting a law case in which he attempted to return slaves to a former master. It is true that he later tried to be released so he could appear for the other side and when he did make his argument for the return of the slaves to their former master it was notably weak. Lincoln, however, at this time was far from the position on the question of slavery that he held ten years

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[47] Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 248.

[48] Albert J. Beveridge, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 394, 395, 396.

later when he and Douglas carried on their famous debates.[48]

The outstanding thing in the Congressional life of Abraham Lincoln, besides his absolute unimportance, was his instability in voting on the question of slavery as it arose in different forms.[49] The only explanation plausible for this vacillation is that he sought to avoid the extremes of pro-slavery exponents and of the Abolitionists. Without a doubt he was against the extension of slavery but not to the extent of letting it interfere with political strategy.

In the Whig Convention of 1848, Lincoln supported General Zachary Taylor in opposition to Henry Clay, because Clay had turned to the Northern Anti-slavery Whigs, and was opposed by the Southern Whigs. Taylor was a large slave holder and was a favorite of the large slave holders of the South. Lincoln looked upon this as an advantage and used all his influence to help nominate and elect Taylor.[50]

In discussing his attitude towards slavery at this time Lincoln stated: "I am in favor of leaving the people of any territory which may be hereafter acquired the right to regulate it (slavery) themselves, under the

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[49] Ibid., op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 435, 436.

[50] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 441.

general principles of the Constitution."[51] Lincoln said that Taylor would be guided by this principle of allowing the people to have their own way and "would force nothing on them which they don't want." He admitted that he did not know what Taylor would do on the Wilmot Proviso; he hoped that Taylor would not veto it, but he did not 'know it.' Yet if I knew he would, I still would vote for him. Why? 'Because. . . .his election alone can defeat General Cass.' If Cass should be elected and 'slavery thereby go to the territory we now have,' we would have the evil 'and in addition a course of policy leading to new wars, new acquisitions of territory, and still further extensions of slavery.'[52] In this statement Lincoln "touched upon slavery just enough to disturb the anti-slavery Democrats and not enough to arouse the pro-slavery Whigs."[53] Slavery, in that day to Abraham Lincoln was a subject to be spoken of or ignored according to whichever was politically healthy.

On January 16, 1849, Lincoln expressed the desire for a bill looking to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. This was the most notable

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51 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 435.

52 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 457.

53 Ibid.

anti-slavery move of Lincoln during his term of office. He proposed that the Committee be directed to bring in a bill which would provide that slavery in the District of Columbia should be confined to the slaves then living in the District. That slaves should not "be held in slavery within the limits of said District," except that Government officials who owned slaves might bring in and take out "necessary servants of themselves and their families," when these officials were in Washington "on public business." Also, "children born of slave mothers within said District" after January 1, 1850, should be free and supported and educated by the owners of the slave mothers, serving as apprentices until a certain age when they should "be entirely free." That the Negro slaves in the District should continue as such "at the will of their owners," but that the national government should pay full value for any whom the owners would sell. A fugitive slave clause was added in which was stated that such slaves should be held and delivered to their owners. Finally, the bill provided for an election at which "every white free male citizen" of the District of twenty-one years or older would be allowed to vote for or against this bill. The President was "to canvass said votes immediately," and, if a majority were for the bill, to forthwith "issue his proclamation giving notice of the fact,"

after which the law should "be in full force and effect."[54] This bill found lodgement "on the table."

In 1848, the Whig party began to split over the question of slavery. Slavery radicalism was found in New England and Lincoln stood with the conservative element of the party against this more radical wing.

In that year the Whig party in New England suddenly arose in revolt against the conservatism of the Southern Whigs, and almost in mass turned to the Free Soil Party. To help crush this rebellion, Lincoln hurried to Massachusetts towards the middle of September. There he made a number of speeches against the 'radical' views of the New England party. His approach was political, and his aim was to help the election possibilities of Taylor. He declared that on the subject of slavery:

> The people of Illinois agreed entirely with the people of Massachusetts. . . .except perhaps that they did not keep so constantly thinking about it. All agreed that slavery was an evil, but that we were not responsible for it and cannot affect it in States of the Union where we do not live. But, the question of the extension of slavery to new territories of this country, is a part of our responsibility and care, and is under our control. In opposition to this, Mr. Lincoln believed that the self-named 'Free Soil' party was far behind the Whigs."[55]

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[54] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. II, pp. 196, 197, 198.

[55] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 182.

At Worcester, Massachusetts, Lincoln offended the people by speaking in a derogatory way about Abolitionists. He said, "I have heard you have Abolitionists here. We have a few in Illinois and we shot one the other day."[56] Finding his attitude to be unpopular, he carefully avoided making the same mistake again.

One event during this tour of New England which may have had lasting effects upon Lincoln was a speech which he heard in Boston delivered by the able William H. Seward upon the question of slavery. The next day after hearing this speech, Lincoln, according to Seward's Memoirs, said to him, 'I have been thinking about what you said in your speech. I reckon you are right. We have got to deal with this slavery question, and got to give much more attention to it hereafter than we have been doing."[57]

So stood Abraham Lincoln in 1849, a conservative Whig who was against slavery but who was absolutely void of any great feeling upon the subject. It is obvious that Barton is correct in the conclusion he reaches about the position in which Lincoln stood on his retirement from Congress.

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[56] Albert J. Beveridge, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 473.

[57] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 476.

In considering Lincoln's political position in 1849, we are impressed by his caution and conservatism. He was not an abolitionist; he was not even a Free-Soiler. He had not yet risen to the high vision of his subsequent statesmanship. In his several efforts to limit the power of slavery, notably by his support of the Wilmot Proviso, and his bill for the elimination of slavery in the District of Columbia, he manifested the faith that surely was in him, but he did not carry his convictions beyond the restricted limits of their logical requirement. He did not belong to the more progressive element of the Whig Party.[58]

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58 William E. Barton, The Life of Abraham Lincoln, Vol. I, p. 297.

SECTION II

CHAPTER IV

LINCOLN AFTER 1849

Lincoln on his return from Congress again took up his life in Springfield as a lawyer riding the immense circuit from which he had been absent for two years. He tells that: "From 1849 to 1854, both inclusive (he) practiced law more assiduously than ever before."[1] Herndon declares that although he kept abreast of the times, "he seemed to have lost that zealous interest in politics which characterized his earlier days."[2] Up until this time, "Lincoln's restless ambition found its gratification only in the field of politics. He used the law merely as a stepping stone to what he considered a more attractive condition in the political world."[3] This, however, was changed now.

> Political defeat had wrought a marked effect on him. It went below the skin and made a changed man of him. He was not soured at his seeming political decline. But still he determined to exclude politics from that time forward and devote himself entirely to the law. And now he began to make up for time lost in politics by studying the law in earnest. No man had greater power of application than he. Once fixing

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[1] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. VII, p. 263.

[2] William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 31.

[3] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 4.

his mind on any subject, nothing could interfere with or disturb him.[4]

The years 1849, till 1854, were five years of brooding silence in the life of Abraham Lincoln, years of the incubation of new ideas.

Lincoln returned home with a keen sense of his own inability to meet the national politicians on their own level. He had stood shoulder to shoulder with the national leaders in Washington and had seen that his manners and education lacked much of the polish necessary for success. This among other things seemed to have thrown him into a melancholy so deep that it was noticed by all. His ambition was unrelenting and when he realized his own shortcomings, plus his one big political blunder, it seemed to him that life was frustrated, that his ambition had come to naught. Frustrated as his hopes were, his ambition never wavered. Herndon refers to this ambition as a "little engine that knew no rest."[5] Certainly it was the spur that drove him forward. When this was coupled with the ambition of his wife who was endowed with an even "more restless ambition than he,"[6] Lincoln could know no peace. He began to study

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[4] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 308.

[5] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 44.

[6] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 295.

and to read as never before. His law partner, Herndon, "noticed a difference in Lincoln's movement as a lawyer from this time forward," for Lincoln "had begun to realize a certain lack of discipline. . . .a want of mental training and method."[7]

The friends and associates of Lincoln soon noticed the change. Herndon says that after a day spent in court on the circuit, that "placing a candle on the chair at the head of the bed, he would read and study for hours." I have known him to study in this position till two o'clock in the morning.[8] It was not only law that occupied him, for he began a course in general education studying mathematics, astronomy and poetry as regularly as a school boy. "In the winter of 1849-50 he even joined a club of a dozen gentlemen of Springfield who had begun the study of German, the meetings of the class being held in his office."[9] On the circuit in his saddle bags he carried a copy of Shakespeare and a volume of Euclid. The one he studied to enrich his speech; the other to promote his logic.

Herndon relates that Lincoln was not a general

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[7] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 307.

[8] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 308.

[9] Ida M. Tarbell, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 238.

reader in various fields of knowledge and that "he never in his life sat down and read a book through."[10] However, "when he had occasion to learn or investigate any subject he was thorough and indefatigable in his search. He not only went to the root of a question, but dug up the root, and separated and analyzed every fiber in it."[11] "....He was physically a lazy man, yet he was not only industrious, but tireless; not only tireless but indefatigable."[12] 'He studied to see the subject matter clearly:' says Graham, 'and to express it truly and strongly. I have known him to study for hours the best way of three to express an idea.'[13]

It took the drive of a great ambition combined with the courage of a very brave man to make Abraham Lincoln arise at this time of life to fight off the ignorance and obscurity which threatened to strangle him in oblivion.

> Much of Lincoln's devotion and study at this period was due to his desire to bring himself in general culture up to the men whom he had been meeting in the East. No man ever realized his own deficiencies in knowledge and experience more deeply than Abraham Lincoln, or made a braver struggle to correct them.[14]

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10 Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 320.

11 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 6.

12 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 325.

13 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 112.

14 Ida M. Tarbell, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 409.

Lincoln on his return from Congress began to delve more deeply into the question of slavery. The cause of this may have been the influence of the address in Boston by Seward which seemed to have impressed Lincoln at that time. The cause may have been the general influence of the Free Soil Party which Lincoln contacted while in New England. Another possible cause was the deep excitement which in 1849, settled over the country as Congress endeavored to fix a policy with regard to the admission of slavery into the new territories.[15] Whatever the cause, the fact remains that something "seems to have started a more serious vein of though on slavery in the mind of the future president."[16]

In 1850, as a result of the combined efforts of Clay and Webster, compromise measures were passed by Congress on the question of slavery in new territories. "For a short time after the passage of the compromise measures the country was tranquil. But the quiet was not a healthful quiet; it was simply the lethargy of reaction."[17] In the mind of Abraham Lincoln the question was not settled. Instead it burned with ever increasing intensity for this was the period when a new habit of thought was developing

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15 Woodrow Wilson, op. cit., p. 165.

16 William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 287.

17 Woodrow Wilson, op. cit., pp. 174. 175.

in the incubator of his mind.

Lincoln's law partner, Herndon, was an Abolitionist at this time and very active and interested in the slavery question. He states:

> I was in correspondence with Sumner, Greeley, Phillips, and Garrison, and was thus embued with all the rancor drawn from such anti-slavery sources. . . .every time a good speech on the great issue was made I sent for it. Hence you could find on my table the latest utterances of Giddings, Phillips, Sumner, Seward, and one whom I considered grander than all the others, Theodore Parker. Lincoln and I took such papers as the Chicago Tribune, New York Tribune, Anti-Slavery Standard, Emancipator, and National Era. On the other side of the question we took the Charleston Mercury, and the Richmond Enquirer. I also bought a book called Sociology, written by one Fitzhugh which defended and justified slavery in every conceivable way. In addition I purchased all the leading histories of the slavery movement, and other works which treated on that subject. . . .After reading them we would discuss the questions they touched upon and the ideas they suggested, from our different points of view.[18]

This was the first time that Lincoln had ever studied the question of slavery to any degree, and since he had started the study, he went deeper and deeper into it for it was his nature not to speak from half-formed ideas. "Before he could form an idea of anything, before he would express his opinion on a subject, he must know its origin and history in substance and quality, in

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18 William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 32.

magnitude and gravity. He must know it inside and outside, upside and downside."[19]

In July, 1852, Lincoln was asked to speak on Henry Clay and on July 16, he delivered a Eulogy in the State House at Springfield. Here for the first time is caught a glimpse of the new habit of thought. Among other quotations there is one from the writings of Thomas Jefferson, speaking of how he was aroused by the slavery issue in 1819. This quotation must have been taken from the four volume abridged set of Jefferson's Works, which had been published in 1829, and was at this time to be found in the State Library in Springfield.[20]

While Lincoln was a member of Congress, a bill was passed authorizing a Congressional edition of the complete works of Thomas Jefferson. This set came from the press in 1853-54, and was bought immediately by the Illinois State Library.[21] From the numerous quotations which were from this time hence cited from Jefferson by Lincoln, it seems certain that he carefully sought to find in the writings of Jefferson a solution for the dilemma into which the problem of slavery and its relation

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[19] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 303.

[20] This information was furnished in a letter written by the librarian of the Illinois State Library, Harriet M. Skogh, August 24, 1937.

[21] Ibid.

to the democratic principles of the government had led the people of America. The files of the Illinois State Library do not include the name of Abraham Lincoln as one of its borrowers.[22] But this is easy to explain in that he did not borrow the books but read them in the library. Nicolay and Hay speak of this study in the library as follows: "The opposition newspapers had accused him of 'mousing about the libraries in the State House'. This charge was true. Where others were content to take statements at second hand, he preferred to verify citations as well as to find new ones."[23]

There is no doubt that the acquirement of the Works of Jefferson by the State Library at Springfield was one of the minor events in history that carried with it great significance. As Lincoln diligently studied its pages he began to see the real relationship between slavery and democracy and began the formation of the great principles which were to make him the outstanding leader of the Nation.

While Lincoln was studying the problem of slavery the country was at peace on this issue. The years between 1850 and 1854, were a time of comparative quiet on the

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22 Ibid.

23 Op. Cit., Vol. I, p. 376.

question. The Fugitive Slave Law did cause some contention, but for the most part only with the more rabid Abolitionists and not with the rank and file of the people. This peace was violently shaken by the introduction of the Kansas-Nebraska bill by Stephen A. Douglas. James F. Rhodes speaks of this period in the following manner:

> The country was at peace. Business was good; evidences of smiling prosperity were everywhere to be seen. The spirit of enterprise was rampant; great works were in progress, others were projected. Political repose was a marked feature of the situation. The slavery question seemed settled, and the dream of the great compromisers of 1850 seemed to be realized. Every foot of land in the states or in the territories seemed to have so far as slavery was concerned, a fixed and settled character. The obnoxious part of the compromise to the North, the Fugitive Slave Law, was no longer resisted. Another era of good feeling appeared to have set in. The earnest hope of Clay, that the work in which he had so large a share would give the country rest from slavery agitation for a generation, did not seem vain. There has been restored, said the President in his message, 'a sense of repose and security to the public mind throughout the confederacy.' This quiet was ruthlessly disturbed by Douglas's report, which though professing in one part not to repeal the Missouri Compromise, closed with a proposition which certainly set it aside.[24]

This proposition read as follows:

> 'It is a disputed point whether slavery is prohibited in the Nebraska country by void enactment. . . .In the opinion of those eminent statesmen who hold that Congress is invested

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24 History of the United States From the Compromise of 1850, Vol. I, p. 428.

> with no rightful authority to legislate upon the subject of slavery in the territories, the eighth section of the act preparatory to the admission of Missouri is null and void.'[25]

Douglas presented this bill on the pretense that "it is due to the South. . . .the constitution. . . .(and) consistency."[26] "It was a pretty comedy," declares Rhodes. "The words of Douglas are those of a self-denying patriot, and not those of a man who was sacrificing the peace of his country, and, as it turned out, the success of his party, to his own personal ambition."[27] Woodrow Wilson declared:

> No bolder or more extraordinary measure had ever been proposed in Congress; and it came upon the country like a thief in the night, without warning or expectation, when parties were trying to sleep off the excitement of former debates about the extension of slavery.[28] As extraordinary as this measure was, with the support of the South and the unquestioning following of Douglas by the Northern Democrats, it was approved by both houses of Congress. The Senate voted 37 to 14; the House 113 to 100.[29]

The response to this bill was immediate. The South gladly accepted what they had not asked for nor expected. "Northern people utterly repudiated the action of the

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[25] Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 426, 427.

[26] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 434.

[27] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 434.

[28] Woodrow Wilson, op. cit., p. 184.

[29] Ibid.

Illinois senator and his supporters. Never but thrice in our history had a feeling so spontaneous, fierce and sincere spread over the North."[30] Public meetings of protest were held all over the North. "In every city and every town, people of the same mind came together and expressed their sentiments."[31] Papers throughout the North were flooded with notices of such meetings until one declared: If the Evening Post were three times as large as it is, and were issued three times a day, we should still despair of finding room for anything like full reports of the spontaneous gatherings which are every day held throughout the North and West.[32] Three thousand and fifty ministers in New England signed a remonstrance against the passage of this measure, and Douglas claimed that on one Sunday fifteen hundred to two thousand sermons were preached against the bill.[33] "The leaders of the party in power had thus enacted into law a measure the importance of which can scarcely be overestimated: but in so doing they had made one fatal blunder. . . .they had not consulted the people."[34] This

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[30] James F. Rhodes, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 463.

[31] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 465.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 478.

[34] Henry W. Elson, Side Lights of American History, p. 307.

was a fatal blunder for, as Wilson says:

> The institution of slavery, however deeply rooted in the habits of one portion of the country, and however solemnly guaranteed under the arrangements of the federal system, had in reality but a single stable foundation, . . .the acquiescence of national opinion. Every social institution must abide by the issue of the two questions, logically distinct but practically inseparable. Is it expedient? Is it Just?[35]

The conflict over the Kansas-Nebraska bill soon broke down old party lines. The majority which put the bill through in 1854 was destroyed in the election of the same year.

> . . . .The House of Representatives which met December 3, 1855, presented an almost hopeless mixture and confusion of party names and purposes. It spent two months in electing a Speaker. Within a year, however, the fusion party temporarily known in Congress as Anti-Nebraska men drew together in coherent organization under the name 'Republican.'[36]

The State of Illinois was more divided in its reaction to the Kansas-Nebraska Bill than were most of the Northern states. Two elements entered into this. The one was that her favorite son, Stephen A. Douglas had introduced the bill. The second was that the people of Illinois were divided in their ancestry between the North and the South.

Lincoln in his autobiography tells of the effect

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[35] Op. cit., p. 119.

[36] Ibid., p. 188.

of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill on him. "In 1854, his profession had almost superseded the thought of politics in his mind, when the repeal of the Missouri Compromise aroused him as he had never been before."[37] From that time hence, Lincoln seldom spoke on the slavery question without mentioning this bill and its effects. His protests against it rose higher as time went on, and his condemnation of it was continually on his lips. It kindled a fire of indignation in his heart which was to brand upon the centuries the name of Abraham Lincoln as one who championed the inalienable rights of every man.

To recapitulate the effects of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, the words of James F. Rhodes are good.

> It is safe to say that in the scope and consequence of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, it was the most momentous measure that passed Congress from the day that the senators and representatives first met to the outbreak of the Civil War. It sealed the doom of the Whig party; it caused the formation of the Republican party on the principle of no extension of slavery; it roused Lincoln and gave a bend to his great political ambition. It made the Fugitive Slave Law a dead letter at the North; it caused the Germans to become Republicans; it lost the Democrats their hold on New England; it made the Northwest Republican; it led to the downfall of the Democratic party.[38]

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[37] Works, Vol. VIII, p. 222.

[38] Op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 490, 491.

CHAPTER V

EVIDENCES OF A NEW MODE OF THOUGHT

In 1854, when Stephen A. Douglas returned from Congress to his home state of Illinois, and tried to speak in its largest city, Chicago, the opposition to him and his Kansas-Nebraska Bill was so great that he was forced after two hours to give up his attempt. The feeling ran so high against him, that even his life was endangered. This, however, acted only as a spur to Douglas, and he launched a campaign which soon brought again to him a great following in Illinois. By October 3, 1854, when the State Fair opened, he had been so successful that people crowded into Springfield to hear him defend his line of action.

On the following day, Abraham Lincoln, better prepared than he had ever been in his life, arose to answer the speech. He had thought of and studied the slavery problem for five years, and his mind had become crystal clear on this subject. This clear mind was set free by a soul which condemned the injustice of the Bill. The result was the greatest address of Lincoln's career up until this time. This has been saved for us under the title of the "Peoria Speech," because twelve days after he first delivered the address in Springfield, he repeated

it in Peoria and then he had the entire manuscript published.

This utterance was so absolutely different from any one formerly made by Lincoln that it seemed to come from a different individual, from a new mind. It is for this reason that the present study maintains that the change was so great that it amounted to virtually a new mode or habit of thinking. It was the key-note utterance of a new and a great Lincoln.

The fact that the "Peoria Speech" marked a definite transformation in the thinking of Lincoln, and was the visible turning-point in his life, is upheld by seven of the nine students of Lincoln, whose books were thought worthy of consideration in Chapter II. These authors will be quoted to substantiate the argument that after five years of comparative quietness a new Lincoln arose in 1854. That a large majority of the best writers on Lincoln should think that this was a fact, is a powerful evidence of a change. This does not ascertain, however, that this innovation went so far as to be considered a new habit of thought. This too must be proved. Therefore, the object of this chapter is first, to show that there was a change, and then to establish that this was so radical that it did amount to a new habit of thought. This second step will be done by a comparison of the earlier writings of Lincoln with the "Peoria Speech."

The first writer to be quoted in establishing the fact that there was evidenced a definite change in Lincoln, was the one who should have known best, his partner at law, William Herndon. He spoke of the time before this as the period when "he had not yet been awakened."[1] He declared that the "Peoria Speech" was so different that it "encouraged his (Lincoln's) friends no less than it startled his enemies."[2] In an editorial which he wrote in the Springfield Journal, Herndon proclaimed:

> The Anti-Nebraska speech of Mr. Lincoln was the profoundest in our opinion that he has made in his whole life. He felt upon his soul the truths burn which he uttered, and all present felt that he was true to his own soul. His feelings once or twice swelled within, and came near stifling utterance. He quivered with emotion. The whole house was as still as death. He attacked the Nebraska bill with unusual warmth and energy; and all felt that a man of strength was its enemy, and that he intended to blast it if he could by strong and manly efforts. He was most successful, and the house approved the glorious triumph of truth by loud and continued huzzas. Women waved their white handkerchiefs in token of woman's silent but heartfelt assent. . . . The Nebraska bill was shivered, and like a tree of the forest was torn and rent asunder by the hot bolts of truth. . . .At the conclusion of this speech every man and child felt that it was unanswerable. He took the heart captive and broke like a sun over the understanding."[3]

Nicolay and Hay lend their testimony to the

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[1] Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 30. (Footnote).

[2] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 36.

[3] Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 37, 38.

transformation portrayed in this speech by Lincoln.

> The occasion greatly equalized the relative standing of the champions. . . .All reports plainly indicate that Douglas was astonished and disconcerted at this unexpected strength of argument, and that he struggled vainly through a two hours' rejoinder to break the force of Lincoln's victory in the debate. Lincoln had hitherto been the foremost man in his district. That single effort had made him the leader of the new question in his State.
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> The fame of this success brought Lincoln urgent calls from all places where Douglas was expected to speak.
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> . . . . . .
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> Marking as it does with unmistakable precision a step in the second period of his intellectual development, it deserves the careful attention of the student of his life.
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> . . . . . .
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> Above all it is pervaded by an elevation of thought and aim that lifts it out of the common-place of mere party controversy. Comparing it with his later speeches, we find it to contain not only the argument of the hour, but the premonition of the broader issues into which the new struggle was destined soon to expand.[4]

Rothschild, although not seeming to realize the source of the change did recognize a new power in the "Peoria Speech," the like of which Lincoln had never shown before. He recounts the meeting of Lincoln and Douglas in Springfield and in Peoria and declares Lincoln gave more opposition to Douglas than had all his opponents in the United States Senate, because Lincoln understood the question better than had they. Rothschild also claims that Lincoln's strong arguments were what drove Douglas

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[4] Op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 379, 380.

from the field. Of the deliverance of this address in Springfield, he writes:

> Aroused by the moral, no less than by the political obliquity of Douglas's course, Lincoln arose above the petty personalities which had disfigured his Scott Club address, and delivered a speech that evoked the praise of even the Senator's supporters. Douglas, himself, as his frequent interruptions of the speaker indicated, was greatly disconcerted by the unexpected sweep and strength of the reply. Moreover, in his excitement and anger, the two hours before supper-time left to him for rejoinder were occupied to so little purpose that he closed with a promise to resume in the evening. Evening came and so did the audience, but not the "Little Giant." Whether he had tumbled into one of the seven-league boots that was putting comfortable distance between him and the big giant, contemporary history saith not. It does relate that when he failed to return, his disappointed auditors drew the inevitable conclusion--and so can we.[5]

With unhesitating directness, Stephenson declares the "Peoria Speech" to be the evidence of a definite change in the life of Abraham Lincoln. He maintains:

> It is a landmark in his career. It sums up all his long, slow development in political science, lays the abiding foundation of everything he thought thereafter. In this great speech, the end of his novitiate, he rings the changes on the white man's charter of freedom.
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> . . . . . .
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> The speech was a masterpiece of simplicity, of lucidity. It showed the great jury lawyer at his best. Its temper was as admirable as its logic; not a touch of anger nor of vituperation.
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> . . . . . .
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> These two speeches against Douglas made an immense

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[5] Op. cit., p. 88.

[6] Op. cit., pp. 78, 79, 80.

impression. Byron-like, Lincoln waked up and found himself famous.[6]

As was shown in Chapter II, Lord Charnwood wrote an excellent biography of Lincoln, and in this work he found more time to spend on the thinking of Lincoln than have most writers. He perceived the change in Lincoln after 1854, and believed that the mature mind which Lincoln demonstrated after that date was the outcome of the five previous years of study. The Peoria address was to him the first evidence of a changed man. The fifth chapter of his book he called "The Rise of Lincoln," which in itself intimates at least a deviation from the past.

Concerning the activity of Lincoln succeeding the first demonstration of new power, Charnwood writes:

> From 1854 onward we find Lincoln almost incessantly occupied, at conventions, at public meetings, in correspondence, in secret consultation with those who looked to him for counsel, for the one object of strengthening the new Republican movement in his own State of Illinois, and, so far as opportunity offered, in the neighboring States. Some of the best of his reported and the most effective of his unreported speeches were delivered between 1854, and 1858.

There can be no doubt that Lord Charnwood considered the "Peoria Speech" as the first major evidence of a drastic variation in the thinking of Lincoln which was to

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6 Op. cit., p. 118.

show itself continually from that time forward.

William E. Barton recognized in the "Peoria Speech" a very powerful utterance, carrying a new force which was impelled by a "mighty impulse of his (Lincoln's) own conscience."[7] He quotes at length from the impression which the speech made upon a young reporter, Horace White, who said at times Lincoln was so transfigured by his subject that he became like unto "the ancient Hebrew prophet." Barton saw this as the introduction of a very different Lincoln.

Albert J. Beveridge gives a fine account of Lincoln's "Peoria Speech." He considered this utterance so important that he used eighteen pages of his work for a summation of the address, with a liberal portion of this given to direct quotation. In referring to the address he declares of Lincoln:

> He had prepared with uncommon thoroughness, even for him. He had studied the debates in Congress and . . . Douglas's speech in the Senate had been published in pamphlet form as well as published in newspapers. For weeks, Lincoln had spent toilsome hours in the State Library, searching trustworthy histories, analyzing the census, mastering the facts, reviewing the literature on the subject.[8]

Beveridge's statement of the utter difference of

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[7] Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 344.

[8] Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 238.

this from any former address by Lincoln is a splendid and an accurate statement.

> Lincoln was now in his forty-sixth year and this speech was wholly unlike any before made by him. Indeed, if it and his public utterances thereafter were placed side by side with his previous speeches, and the authorship of them all were unknown, it would appear impossible that they had been written by the same man. Because of this and because the Springfield address contained all the ideas, or the germs of them that Lincoln expressed thereafter and up to the time he wrote the Emancipation Proclamation, a comprehensive resumé of what he said must now be given. (Follows the eighteen page resumé.)[9]

The above quotations establish the claim that the majority of the better writers on Lincoln look to the Peoria address as the expression of a changed Lincoln. This is the first evidence of a new mode of thinking.

As a second evidence of a new mode of thought, there will be shown that there was a definite change in the attitude towards Lincoln of those around him. This was portrayed in his rapid strides to leadership after this time. Before 1854, Lincoln was prominent in a small area surrounding Springfield; after 1854, his fame spread rapidly to the four corners of the land and across the seas. This study maintains that this ever widening fame was a direct result of a new mode of thinking.

The first sign of a new Lincoln was when he delivered his address (Peoria Speech) in Springfield. This

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[9] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 244.

was so impressive that as soon as he had finished speaking, Owen Lovejoy, a fiery Abolitionist, moved forward through the crowd and announced a meeting of all friends of Freedom to be held that evening in the same place. He saw in Lincoln a powerful leader and hoped in this way to connect him to the radical group. So this shows that Abolitionists sought the leadership of Lincoln after his demonstration of such ability and power.[10]

Also, after this address the Anti-Nebraska leaders saw in Lincoln an instrument great enough to confront the Democratic national leader, Stephen A. Douglas. They heard with amazement the erstwhile unimportant local politician arise and become a "Little Giant" killer. Thereafter, they induced Lincoln to follow Douglas and answer him wherever he spoke. In other words, the Anti-Nebraska leaders saw in the new Lincoln their greatest exponent and leader.[11]

During that same fall of 1854, Lincoln's new prominence was unquestionably demonstrated by his nomination and election to the State Legislature even over his protest. He had often been elected to the State Legislature, but now his leadership was desired so much that

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[10] William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 41.

[11] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 42.

they elected him against his will to a position which he soon resigned.[12]

Lincoln, realizing the change which had come in the attitude of the people towards him and perceiving his new power, decided to run for the United States Senate. He was defeated in this election, but the point still remains that a man who had a year previous been a quiet lawyer, now stood in the eyes of the public enough to run an excellent race for the Senate.[13]

The next irrevocable evidence of a much greater Lincoln was his role in the new Republican Party. He had remained clear of any new party until the spring of 1856, when after Herndon had signed his name to a call for a County Republican Convention, he consented to join with them. The Republican party, as such, did not come into existence in Illinois, however, until a short time thereafter. On May 29, 1856, the State convention met in Bloomington and Lincoln was among those present. He was determined that the radicals should not have their way, and "that they did not, was largely due to his cooling advice and skilful guidance."[14] Lincoln was named one of the Presidential Electors at Large and a delegate to the National Convention to be held in Philadelphia,

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12 Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 43, 44.
13 Ibid.,
14 Albert J. Beveridge, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 367.

beginning on June 17. Repeated calls for Lincoln to speak at the State Convention were finally answered when he arose and gave an address which Herndon believed to be the greatest of his life.[15] So masterful was it that reporters forgot to take notes on it, and so convincing was it that it swayed the whole party to a conservative position. Even a radical Abolitionist, Jesse K. Dubois, after the address said to a friend, "Whitney, that is the greatest speech ever made in Illinois and it puts Lincoln on the track for the Presidency."[16] No one can imagine the unimportant and little known Lincoln of two years before being mentioned as presidential timber.

The ever widening circle of Lincoln's influence is avowed in Herndon's description of his popularity as a speaker on his return from the State Convention.

> He was in demand everywhere. I have before me a package of letters addressed to him, inviting him to speak at almost every county seat in the State. Yates wanted him to go to one section of the State, Washburne to another, and Trumbull still another; while every cross-roads politician and legislative aspirant wanted him "down in our county, where we need your help.". . .The demand for Lincoln was not confined to his own State. Indiana sent for him, Wisconsin also, while Norman B. Judd and Ebenzer Peck, who were stumping Iowa, sent for him to come there. . . .A settlement of Germans in southern Indiana asked to hear him; and the president of a college, in an invitation to address the students

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15 William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. II, p.53.

16 Albert J. Beveridge, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 379.

> under his charge, characterized him as "one providentially raised up for a time like this, and even should defeat come in the contest, it would be some consolation to remember we had a Hector for a Leader."[17]

At the first National Republican Convention, one of the Illinois delegates, William B. Archer, considered his fellow statesman, Abraham Lincoln, worthy of the nomination for the Vice Presidency. Archer did not stand alone in this conviction for on the first ballot, Lincoln received one hundred and ten votes.[18] This is an unmistakable sign that Abraham Lincoln in less than two years after his "Peoria Speech" had become a person to be reckoned with nationally. This fame continued to increase and was greatly augmented by the series of debates with Douglas in 1858, and then two years later it swept Lincoln into the White House.

The rapid rise of Abraham Lincoln after 1854, can be accounted for in only one way; he was a changed man. Lincoln, himself, recognized this change and spoke of it as a religious man speaks of his conversion. He dated events from that year. In his "Autobiography," he declared: "His speeches at once attracted a more marked attention

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[17] William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 55, 56.

[18] Albert J. Beveridge, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 398.

than they had ever done before."[19] Another time he said, "What I have done since that is pretty well known."[20] He knew that the year 1854, marked a dividing line in his life, and evidenced the time of a new understanding and power.

When it is accepted that there was a change in Lincoln's thought, the question still remains: How radical was this transformation? The correct answer seems to be that it was so definite that it amounted to a new mode of thinking. A comparison of the statements of Lincoln on slavery preceeding 1849, with his "Peoria Speech" is the basis of this deduction. Therefore, this parallel study will be made and will be divided into the four major fields of slavery thought: Slavery and Democracy, Existence and Expansion, Emancipation and Colonization, and Slavery and the Union.

Slavery and Democracy.

A time did not exist in his public life when Abraham Lincoln did not oppose slavery and love democracy. In 1837, at Springfield, in an address to the Young Men's Lyceum, he directed his remarks against "mobocracy," the spirit of which he believed threatened Democracy. His answer in 1837, to such a spirit was:

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[19] Works, Vol. VIII, p. 222.
[20] Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 263.

> Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well-wisher to his posterity swear by the blood of the Revolution never to violate in the least particular the laws of the country, and never to tolerate their violation by others. As the patriots of seventy-six did to support the Declaration of Independence, so to the support of the Constitution and laws let every American pledge his life, his property, and his sacred honor--let every man remember that to violate the law is to trample on the blood of his father, and to tear the charter of his own and his children's liberty.[21]

One month and seven days later he and Dan Stone entered their protest against the attitude of the majority of the members of the Illinois Legislature towards slavery. "They believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy. . . ,"[22] it declared.

These are but examples of the attitude of Lincoln towards the two institutions. Also, at this time he understood that there was at the least a slight inconsistency between the two, for in a temperance address, he said:

> Of our political revolution of '76 we are all justly proud.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> And when the victory shall be complete,--when there shall be neither a slave nor a drunkard on the earth,--how proud the title of that land which may truly claim to be the birthplace and the cradle of both those revolutions that shall have ended in that victory.[23]

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21 Works, Vol. II, p. 20.

22 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 26.

23 Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 84, 85, 86.

By 1854, this inconsistency of slavery with democracy was no longer slight in the mind of Lincoln; it was paramount.

When speaking against the spirit of "mobocracy" to the Young Men's Lyceum, in 1837, Lincoln made reference only by inference to the demonstration of it closest home. A passionate young Abolitionist, Elijah P. Lovejoy, had been killed only a short time before in Illinois, but Lincoln made no direct reference to this. In the one indirect mention that he made of it he showed no approval of either Lovejoy nor of the cause which he represented, because he felt no approval. In drastic contrast stands his attitude towards the same event when he spoke of it in 1857. "Lovejoy's tragic death for freedom in every sense marked his sad ending as the most important single event that ever happened in the new world."[24] This change in attitude toward the death of Elijah Lovejoy is but an exemplification of the total change after 1854, and the difference is almost as obvious in his new attitude towards slavery and democracy. His new understanding and his new intensity of feeling made the "Peoria Speech" vastly different from the early feeble remarks that have been quoted. At Peoria he said:

> My faith in the proposition that each man should do precisely as he pleases with all which is exclusively his own lies at the foundation of the

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[24] Abraham Lincoln, Uncollected Letters, pp. 71, 72.

> sense of justice there is in me. I extend the principle to communities of men as well as to individuals. . . .The doctrine of self-government is right,--absolutely and eternally right, --but it has no just application as here attempted. Or perhaps I should rather say that whether it has such application depends upon whether a negro is not or is a man. If he is not a man, in that case he who is a man may as a matter of self-government do just what he pleases with him. But if the negro is a man, is it not to that extent a total destruction of self-government to say that he too shall not govern himself? When the white man governs himself, that is self-government: but when he governs himself and also governs another man, that is more than self-government--that is despotism. If the negro is a man, why then my ancient faith teaches me that "all men are created equal," and that there can be no moral right in connection with one man's making a slave of another.
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> . . . . . .
>
> What I do say is that no man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent. I say this is the leading principle, the sheet anchor of American republicanism. Our Declaration of Independence says:
>
> 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal: That they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."[25]

Lincoln showed in this address not only his faith in democracy and his hatred of slavery but also his conviction that the two were absolutely antagonistic.

> Slavery is founded in the selfishness of man's nature--opposition to it in his love of justice. These principles are in eternal antagonism, and

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[25] Works, Vol. II, pp. 247, 248.

> when brought into collision so fiercely as slavery extension brings them, shocks and throes and convulsions must ceaselessly follow. Repeal the Missouri Compromise, repeal all compromises, repeal the Declaration of Independence, repeal all past history, you still cannot repeal human nature.[26]
>
> I object to it because it assumes that there can be moral right in the enslaving of one man by another. I object to it as a dangerous dalliance for a free people--a sad evidence that, feeling prosperity, we forget right; and that liberty, as a principle, we have ceased to revere. I object to it because the fathers of the republic eschewed and rejected it. The only argument of "necessity" was the only argument they ever admitted in favor of slavery; and so far and so far only, as it carried them did it ever go.[27]

After this comparison of Lincoln's earlier expressions on slavery and democracy with those of the "Peoria Speech", it may justly be said that there is undoubtedly evidenced a difference in understanding and in intensity of feeling. Lincoln always loved democracy and hated slavery, but before 1849, he did not feel their complete contradiction. This was an element of his new mode of thought.

The Existence and the Expansion of Slavery.

In 1837, Abraham Lincoln expressed a belief concerning the existence of slavery which he maintained until he issued the Emancipation Proclamation. It was a portion of the protest by Lincoln and Stone to the Illinois Legis-

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[26] Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 256, 257.

[27] Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 260, 261.

lature, and read: "They believe that the Congress of the United States has no power to interfere with the institution of slavery in the different States."[28] In the "Peoria Speech" he did not want to give any one an opportunity to claim that his view was any different, so he stated: "I wish to make and keep the distinction between the existing institution and the extension of it, so broad and clear that no honest man can misunderstand me, and no dishonest one successfully misrepresent me."[29]

Although his view upon the legality of the slaves in the states where slavery was established was the same after 1854, Abraham Lincoln's ideas towards the expansion of this evil to other places took on new elements, and this variation showed itself in the speech at Springfield and Peoria. In 1845, expansion of slavery did not greatly worry Lincoln as is shown in a letter to Williamson Durley in which he writes of the question of the annexation of Texas in relationship to slavery.

> I perhaps ought to say that individually I never was much interested in the Texas question. I could never see much good to come of the annexation, inasmuch as they were already a free republican people on our own model. On the other hand, I never could very clearly see how the annexation would augment the evil of slavery. It always seemed to me that slaves would be

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[28] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 27.

[29] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 220.

> taken there in about equal numbers, with or without annexation. And if more were taken because of annexation, still there would be just so many the fewer left where they were taken from. It is possibly true, to some extent, that, with annexation, some slaves may be sent to Texas and continued in slavery that otherwise might have been liberated. To whatever extent this may be true, I think annexation an evil.[30]

Three years later, the views of Lincoln had changed a bit for he expressed the desire "that we shall not acquire any (land) extending so far south as to enlarge and aggravate the distracting question of slavery."[31] But even this more advanced step falls far short of the concept expressed in the following citation from the "Peoria Speech." Lincoln is heard answering Douglas's Statement that he did not care whether slavery was voted "up or down," that his aim was to establish democracy in the territories.

> This declared indifference, but as I must think, covert real zeal for the spread of slavery, I cannot but hate. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world; enables the enemies of free institutions with plausibility to taunt us as hypocrites; causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity; and especially because it forces so many good men among ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty, criticising the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest.[32]

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[30] Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 248.

[31] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 156.

[32] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 230.

Lincoln cried for some form of emancipation, but said that he knew the difficulties that were involved, and added, "But all this, to my judgment, furnishes no more excuse for permitting slavery to go into our own free territory than it would for reviving the African slave trade by law."[33]

From the above citations, it may be concluded that the opinion of Lincoln about the existing institution of slavery was the same earlier as in 1854, but his view on the expansion of the institution had accepted the position which differentiated the Republican from the Whig party. It had passed the point of passive resistance and entered the field of very active opposition. The difference was one that arose from a belief that slavery must die if democracy was to live, and that it would die when circumscribed in an area and not allowed to escape. The difference was one that arose from Lincoln's new understanding of the incompatibility of slavery and democracy, and to save democracy he believed slavery must be turned in upon itself and allowed to die.

Emancipation and Colonization

Lincoln, so far as the records show, did not speak of colonization prior to 1849. Of emancipation he had but little more to say. His concept of it was expressed in the

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[33] Ibid., Vol. II, page 231.

protest of 1837.

> They believe that the Congress of the United States has the power, under the Constitution, to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, but that the power ought not to be exercised, unless at the request of the people of the District.[34]

In 1849, he attempted to carry out this idea in his bill to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia which was cited in Chapter III.

In the "Peoria Speech," Lincoln gave his doctrine of emancipation and colonization as follows:

> If all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do as to the existing institution. My first impulse would be to free all the slaves, and send them to Liberia, to their own native land. But a moment's reflection would convince me that whatever of high hope (as I think there is) there may be in this in the long run, its sudden execution is impossible. If they were all landed there in a day, they would all perish in the next ten days; and there are not surplus shipping and surplus money enough to carry them there in many times ten days. What then? Free them all, and keep them among us as underlings? Is it quite certain that this betters their condition? I think I would not hold one in slavery at any rate, yet the point is not clear enough for me to denounce people upon. What next? Free them and make them politically and socially our equals. My own feelings will not admit of this, and if mine would, we well know that those of the great mass of whites will not.* Whether this feeling accords with justice and

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[34] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 27.

* Not until 1862, did Lincoln come to the point where he was willing to make the freed slaves political and social equals of the white race. This, however, did not keep him from seeking their emancipation and colonization--acts which he believed should go together.

> sound judgment is not the sole question, if indeed it is any part of it. A universal feeling, whether well or ill founded, cannot be safely disregarded. We cannot then make them equals. It does seem to me that systems of gradual emancipation might be adopted, but for their tardiness in this I will not undertake to judge our brethren of the South.[35]

In 1849, Lincoln sought to free a handful of slaves because he opposed slavery, but in 1854, Lincoln sought to free every slave because of a passionate hatred of this institution which endangered democracy. The early view arose from an idea; the later belief came from a philosophy. The two seem to be from two different men, from two different minds.

Slavery and the Union

Prior to 1849, Lincoln made no reference to the relationship of slavery and the Union, because he saw but little connection between the two. In 1854, he saw the two in their relative positions. The repeal of the Missouri Compromise had raised this question, and Lincoln had a definite answer which fitted into his entire philosophy.

> Much as I hate slavery, I would consent to the extension of it rather than see the Union dissolved, just as I would consent to any great evil to avoid a greater one. But when I go to Union-saving, I must believe at least, that the means I employ have some adaption to the end. To my mind, Nebraska has no such adoption. "It hath no relish of salvation in it."[36]

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[35] Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 231, 232.

[36] Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 254, 255.

One of the most powerful and one of the most beautiful statements ever made by Abraham Lincoln appears in the climax of the "Peoria Speech." Its style and beauty were alien to any earlier utterance.

> In our greedy chase to make profit of the negro, let us beware lest we "cancel and tear in pieces" even the white man's charter of freedom.
>
> Our republican robe is soiled and trailed in the dust. Let us repurify it. Let us turn and wash it white in the spirit, if not the blood of the Revolution. Let us turn slavery from its claims of "moral right" back upon its existing legal rights and its arguments of "necessity." Let us return it to the position our fathers gave it, and there let it rest in peace. Let us readopt the Declaration of Independence, and with it the practices and policy which harmonize with it. Let North and South--let all Americans--let all lovers of liberty everywhere join in the great and good work. If we do this, we shall not only have saved the Union, but we shall have so saved it as to make and keep it forever worthy of the saving. We shall have so saved it that the succeeding millions of free happy people, the world over, shall rise up and call us blessed to the latest generation.[37]

As a summation of this comparison of the "Peoria Speech" with Lincoln's earlier utterances on slavery it can be said that in this "Peoria Speech" he expressed for the first time his belief of the utter incompatibility of slavery and democracy; for the first time he expressed the conviction that slavery must die and that this was to be done by circumscribing it in the area where it then existed; for the first time he showed such a hatred of

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[37] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 264.

slavery that he sought to free every slave and send them out of America; and for the first time he saw the imminent threat of slavery to the Union and expressed his devotion to the Union when he declared he would rather slavery be extended than the Union be dissolved.

If this address which Lincoln made in Springfield and in Peoria was different not only from those before but also from those that came afterward, then it would be false to claim that it represented a new mind. The fact is, however, that Lincoln stood upon new heights from which he never again descended. The future utterances continued to show the new interest, the new understanding, and the new radicalism that so set off this 1854 speech from those that came before it.

Finally, what conclusions can be drawn from the foregoing study? The following ones seem to be justified: Such an utterance as the "Peoria Speech" could have come only from a person very deeply concerned with the slavery problem, therefore, it could not have come from Lincoln prior to 1849. Such an utterance could not have come from a person who had been studying the subject only a few months for it went too deeply into the fundamental principles. This substantiates the view that Lincoln's new habit of thought did not arise after the repeal of the Missouri Compromise but it had been forming between

1849 and 1854. This peoria speech is unquestionable proof that a new Lincoln had arisen whose mental processes were so different from the old that he might be said to have a new mode of thought and expression. The "Peoria Speech" undoubtedly is the key-note of a new and a great Lincoln.

CHAPTER VI

THE PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW MODE OF THOUGHT

From the summer of 1854 on, Lincoln found the answers to the various questions of slavery by referring them to the fundamental principles of democracy. He now had an attitude toward slavery which was completely thought out and rested upon a philosophy of government, democratic in nature.[1] His concept from this time forward was, "We have to fight this battle upon principle, and upon principle alone."[2]

It was because of this attitude that Lincoln was more successful against Douglas than was anyone else. Douglas's great ability was "to becloud and belittle the best argument of an opponent, to throw the main points in the background, and make his hearers believe that it was the thing after all."[3] Dealing with fundamentals, as Lincoln did, it was much more difficult to throw him off of the main track. Another advantage of treating the question on principle was that it avoided littleness, pettiness, and the dealing in personalities. Also this gave Lincoln a confidence in himself and in his conclusions

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[1] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. V, p. 183.

[2] Ibid., Vol. III, p. 75.

[3] Henry W. Elson, op. cit., p. 304.

which was as amazing to his friends as it was disagreeable to his enemies. Lincoln felt he was right because he had tested his ideas by a standard of the right.

Lincoln realized the difficulty of the problem and sought to solve it with great principles. He asserted:

> I think that one of the causes of these repeated failures is that our best and greatest men have greatly underestimated the size of this question. They have constantly brought forward small cures for great sores--plasters too small to cover the wound. This is one reason that all settlements have proved so temporary, so evanescent.[4]

The three fundamental elements entering into Lincoln's concept of a democracy were a government by the will of the majority of the people, seeking the equality of all people, with the aim of achieving good for the people--a government "by the people," "of the people," and "for the people." Lincoln found this concept in the heart of the Declaration of Independence, and ever upon the lips of its author, Thomas Jefferson.

The first great principle of democracy to which Lincoln held and by which he sought to judge the right or the wrong of an issue was the will of the people. Lincoln had held this belief all his life and it was not an innovation after 1849, but after that year he did apply it more fully to the slavery question. He realized that public opinion is the final appeal of the American

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[4] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. V, p. 53.

government, and declared, "Public opinion in this country is everything."[5] He purposely trimmed his sails to the winds of public opinion, and it was always his final guide. He was not a leader but a follower of public opinion and time and again refused to follow a radical idea until the people wanted it. Herndon notes that in talking of social reforms such as universal suffrage, temperance, and slavery Lincoln maintained:

> All such questions must first find lodgement with the most enlightened souls who stamp them with their approval. In God's own time they will be organized into law and thus woven into the fabric of our institutions.[6]

Lincoln held an implicit trust that in the long run public opinion would be right.

> Mr. Lincoln was always willing to trust the people upon a question of right and wrong. He never was afraid to stake his chance upon the faith that what was intrinsically right would prove in the long run to be politically safe. While he was a shrewd politician in matters of detail, he had the wisdom always in a great question to get upon that side where the inherent morality lay.[7]

Upon this idea, that the will of the people in the long run would be an expression of their higher moral nature and therefore right, Lincoln based his faith in the final overthrow of slavery. He believed:

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[5] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol, IV, p. 239.

[6] Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 158.

[7] John T. Morse, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 123, 124.

> Whenever the issue can be distinctly made, and all extraneous matter thrown out, so that men can fairly see the real difference between the parties, this controversy will soon be settled, and it will be done peaceably too.[8]

The second fundamental element which lay at the basis of Lincoln's philosophy of democracy was equality. He did not consider all men equal in all things but did consider them equal in some, among which are "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." He believed that men should be equal in that they are allowed to eat the bread they make from the sweat of their brows.[9]

When he applied his idea of equality to the negroes he said: "I believe the declaration that 'all men are created equal' is the great fundamental principle upon which our free institutions rest; that negro slavery is a violation of that principle."[10] He added:

> They did not mean to assert the obvious untruth that all were then actually enjoying that equality, nor yet that they were about to confer it immediately upon them. In fact, they had no power to confer such a boon. They meant simply to declare the right, so that enforcement of it might follow as fast as circumstances should permit.
>
> They meant to set up a standard maxim for free society, which should be familiar to all, and revered by all; constantly looked to, constantly

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[8] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. IV, p. 181.

[9] Ibid., Vol. III, p. 23.

[10] Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 79.

> labored for, and even though never perfectly attained, constantly approximated, and thereby constantly spreading and deepening its influence and augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people of all colors everywhere. The assertion that "All men are created equal" was of no practical use in effecting our separation from Great Britain; and it was placed in the Declaration not for that, but for future use. Its authors meant it to be--as, thank God, it is proving itself--a stumbling-block to all those who in after times might seek to turn a free people back into the hateful paths of despotism.[11]

Lincoln believed that the system of slavery would keep the negro always ignorant and vicious, but "we propose to give all a chance; and we expected the weak to grow stronger, the ignorant wiser, and all better and happier together."[12]

This principle of equality in Lincoln's philosophy sought to alleviate inequality and to emancipate labor in whatever form it was oppressed. "Equality in society," he asserted, "beats inequality, whether the latter be of the British aristocratic sort or of the domestic slavery sort."[13] He considered slavery as a "war upon the rights of all working people."[14]

Lincoln, no less than Douglas, had sensed the

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[11] Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 24, 25.

[12] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 218.

[13] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 216.

[14] Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 185, 186.

> fact that money was becoming a power in American politics. He saw that money and slavery tended to become allies with the inevitable result of a shift of gravity in the American social system. "Humanity" had once been the American shibboleth; it was giving place to a new shibboleth. . . . "prosperity." And the people who were to control and administer prosperity were the rich. The rights of man were being superseded by the rights of wealth. Because of its place in this new coalition of non-democratic influences, slavery, to Lincoln's mind, was assuming a new role, 'beginning,' as he had said, in the Clay oration, to assail and ridicule the white man's charter of freedom, the declaration that "all men are created free and equal."[15]

With this change of the center of gravity of the American social system came also a change in the fight for equality. Those who sought democracy began to shift in their defenses "from free land to legislation, from the ideal of individualism to the ideal of social control through regulation by law."[16] Lincoln was the great leader of this new application of democratic principles.

"It was because of these views, because he saw slavery allying itself with the spread of plutocratic ideals, that Lincoln entered the battle to prevent its extension."[17] "I hate it," he declared, "because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world. . . ."[18]

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[15] Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, op. cit., p. 77.

[16] Frederick Jackson Turner, op. cit., p. 277.

[17] Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, op. cit., p. 78.

[18] Abraham Lincoln, Works., Vol. II, p. 230.

> He strove in many ways to induce his country and the world to conceive of the Civil War as a struggle between Labor and Capital. To his mind neither the issue of Slavery or Abolition, nor of Nationality or State's Rights was as base in relation to the war as the labor issue.[19]

But more fundamental even than the labor issue to Lincoln was his war for equality. This lay at the basis of his war for labor, and his war for labor lay at the base of his war for emancipation of Negro slaves.

So it was the democratic principle of "equality" that called forth from Lincoln his highest humanitarian qualities. His deepest moral nature was attuned to the principle of equality and so against slavery. "He loved humanity when it was oppressed,"[20] and sought to restore liberty, the love of which "God has planted in us."[21] So it was that Lincoln's fight for equality carried the fire of his deepest moral convictions.

The third fundamental principle in Lincoln's philosophy of democracy was to establish and maintain conditions that were for the good of the people. This to his thinking is the aim of democracy. Sometimes this good proved to be a modifying process for, if to establish the good great destruction had to be wrought, the good

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[19] Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, op. cit., p. 457.

[20] William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 210.

[21] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. III, p. 230.

should not be established at once but slowly so as to cause as little destruction as possible. It was this principle that dictated Lincoln's policy on two major fields of slavery thought--the existence and the extension of slavery, and the relationship of slavery to the Union.

It was at this point that a difference in personal opinion might become involved and did become involved. It was here that Lincoln differed from the abolitionists for they sought the ultimate good at once regardless of the consequences, but he wanted to proceed more slowly so as to avoid any great convulsion. They were absolute idealists seeking the ultimate end at once; he was a realistic idealist who sought to move a step at a time.[22] "He was contemplative rather than speculative."[23]

Lincoln accepted the existence of slavery upon exactly the same grounds that the "fathers of the republic" did--"necessity."[24] He stated his position as the same as the Republican party, which was:

> They look upon it as being a moral, social, and political wrong; and while they contemplate it as such, they nevertheless have due regards for its actual existence among us, and the difficulties of getting rid of it in any satisfactory way, and to all the constitutional obligations

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[22] George Croft Cell, Class Notes.

[23] William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 145.

[24] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. II, p. 261.

thrown about it.[25]

Lincoln did not feel that it was right or for the good of the nation to oppose slavery where it already existed, but he did believe it was right and for the good of the majority of people to oppose the extension of slavery.

Lincoln looked upon slavery and its relationship to the Union as a paramount question. Strong as was his belief in freedom and equality for the negroes, he believed that the good of the greater number of people lay in saving the Union rather than destroying slavery. While he was President and while the war raged, he wrote to Horace Greeley, "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery."[26] Lincoln saw more lasting good in the Union than in the freedom of the slaves with the Union broken. His aim was the greatest good for the greatest number and so he chose Union.

From the summer of 1854 on, Lincoln found the answer to the various questions of slavery by referring them to the fundamental principles of democracy. He now had an attitude towards slavery which was completely

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[25] Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 176.

[26] Ibid., Vol. VIII, p. 44.

thought out and rested upon a philosophy of government, democratic in nature. This change amounted to a radically new mode of thought. The radical nature of this new mode of thought consisted in his having set slavery in the larger framework of his thought on Democracy, the main principles of which were to discover the will of the people and legislate in accordance therewith; to get the equality for all people; and to maintain the greatest good for the greatest number of the people.

So it was that Lincoln built his philosophy of democracy upon the three fundamental points of the Declaration of Independence which he defined as "a government of the people, by the people, and for the people." And so it was that Lincoln sought to solve the slavery dilemma by an application of these principles.

SECTION III

CHAPTER VII

MINOR SOURCES OF THE NEW MODE OF THOUGHT

The object of Section II, was to show that a definite change which amounted to a new mode of thought came over the thinking of Abraham Lincoln upon the question of slavery after 1849. The object of Section III, is to attempt to trace the sources of this new mode of thought, giving credit as far as possible to every source of influence. It would be foolish as well as false to assume that only one person influenced Lincoln on this question and so minor influences will be given their proper place.

These minor influences can be divided into four general groups: first, intimate associates; second, contemporary national leaders of the anti-slavery movement; third, outstanding statesmen; and fourth, the man who dominated the political thinking of Lincoln for years, Henry Clay.

Among the intimate associates of Lincoln only one, as far as the records show, had very much influence upon his thinking on this question. He was his law partner and friend, William H. Herndon. Herndon was some years younger than Lincoln and much more radical. He said of himself:

> The murder of Lovejoy filled me with more desperation than the slave scene in New Orleans did Lincoln; for while he believed in non-interference with slavery, so long as the constitution permitted and authorized its existence, I although acting nominally with the Whig party up to 1853, struck out for Abolitionism pure and simple.[1]

Very likely the greatest influence Herndon wielded was not his personal influence but rather the influence of the slavery literature which he had in abundance about the office. Herndon tells that:

> After reading them we would discuss the questions they touched upon and the ideas they suggested, from our different points of view. I was never conscious of having made much of an impression on Mr. Lincoln, nor do I believe I ever changed his views. I will go further and say, that from the profound nature of his conclusions and the labored method by which he arrived at them, no man is entitled to the credit of having either changed or greatly modified them.[2]

Herndon may have under-estimated his influence upon Lincoln for it was during the years they discussed these problems in their office that Lincoln's interest in the slavery issue increased very greatly. The personal influence of Herndon and other associates seems, therefore, to have been more in the way of arousing Lincoln's interest than solving the problem. They helped him realize the seriousness of slavery, but furnished little aid in the development of a philosophy to deal

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[1] Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 179.

[2] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 32.

with the issue.

The influence of the contemporary anti-slavery leaders upon Abraham Lincoln may have been only like that of his intimate associates in that it was more along the line of arousing interest in the question than in offering him an adequate solution in settling the question. The statement that Seward said Lincoln made to him in 1848 in Boston, "I have been thinking about what you said in your speech. I reckon you are right. We have got to deal with the slavery question, and got to give much more attention to it hereafter than we have been doing," may typify the influence of this group upon Lincoln.

It may have been from this group, however, that Lincoln accepted the key to the solution of this problem. This key was the Declaration of Independence, which opened the door for Lincoln to the great democratic principles and so to a solution of the problem. No man before him had been able to use this key so effectively and to open the deeper recesses of this question. Others had believed that the Declaration of Independence held the solution, but none had been able to apply it to all of the ramifications of the slavery issue.

In the Declaration of Sentiments of the American Anti-slavery Society, organized in Philadelphia in 1833, William Lloyd Garrison referred to the Declaration of

Independence adopted in the same city fifty-seven years before as the strongest abolition argument that could be made. He quoted the phrase "that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."[3] This became the key-note of the Anti-slavery movement in America, and likely it was from this group that Lincoln took the idea. Lincoln was not satisfied with the surface statement, however, and so sought the roots of this idea and there found the real solution.

Upon his return from Congress in 1849, Lincoln began to read the writings of these anti-slavery leaders much more than ever before. Upon many points he did not agree with these men and especially when they advocated disunion as a remedy to the problem. He did not then nor did he ever agree with such declarations as "No union with slaveholders," or proclamations that the Constitution was "a covenant with death and agreement with hell."[4] He did not agree with such radical utterances as Hinton R. Helper's The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It,[5] in

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[3] James F. Rhodes, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 59.

[4] Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 74, 75.

[5] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. V, p. 35.

which Helper advocated an eleven point program which sought to free the slaves at once by taxing the owners so heavily they would have to give them up.[6]

Although the more radical views of the anti-slavery leaders were not agreeable to Abraham Lincoln, he was impressed especially by the writings of Horace Greeley and Theodore Parker, and to some degree by those of Sumner, Phillips and Garrison. It is impossible to estimate the impression made upon Lincoln by any one of these men as he made no reference to such an influence. The only way that it is known that they did leave their mark upon the mind of Lincoln is because of Herndon's record to that effect. He gives an illustration of Lincoln's use of an idea expressed by Parker in one of his sermons on slavery. The idea as stated by Parker was, "Democracy is direct self-government, over all the people, for all the people, by all the people."[7] Lincoln's Gettysburg Address echoes the idea and many of the words. Herndon also tells:

> Every time a good speech on the great issue was made I sent for it. Hence you could find on my table the latest utterances of Giddings, Phillips, Sumner, Seward, and one whom I considered grander than all the others--Theodore Parker. Lincoln and I took such papers as the Chicago Tribune, New York Tribune, Anti-Slavery Standard, Emancipator, and the National Era. . . .In addition I purchased all the leading histories of the

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[6] Pages 155, 156.

[7] William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 65.

> slavery movement, and other works which treated on that subject. Lincoln himself never bought many books, but he and I read those that I have named.[8]

Herndon did not believe that these men and writings had a great influence upon Lincoln,[9] and certainly they must not have if he did not think so and Lincoln did not mention them. However, it seems likely that these anti-slavery leaders did help to arouse Lincoln's interest in the subject, and possibly to some degree helped him find a solution to the slavery problem.

The third group which seemed to throw the shadow of its influence upon Lincoln can be designated as outstanding statesmen. Among this group should be included George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, John Marshall, Andrew Jackson, and Daniel Webster. It was to the writings and speeches and ideas of these men that Lincoln turned to find an adequate solution to the problem of slavery. Each, it seems, had a bit to offer.

Abraham Lincoln always had a very high respect for George Washington and a deep sense of gratitude for his work. In his Works, Lincoln makes twenty-three references to Washington, but only six of these preceding the year 1849. These six references with their date and general subject follow:

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[8] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 32.

[9] Ibid.

1. 1837--Patriotism.

. . . .That we improved to the last, that we remained free to the last, that we revered his name to the last, that during his long sleep we permitted no hostile foot to pass over or desecrate his last resting-place, shall be that which to learn the last trump shall awaken our Washington.[10]

2. 1839--National Bank.

. . . .A majority of the Revolutionary patriarchs. . . .commencing with George Washington. . . .have decided upon their oaths that such a bank is constitutional.[11]

3. 1839--Expense of Government.

The last ten years under General Jackson and Mr. Van Buren cost more money than the first twenty-seven did (including the heavy expenses of the late British war) under Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison.[12]

4. 1842--Washington's Birthday.

This is the one hundred and tenth anniversary of the birthday of Washington; we are met to celebrate this day. Washington is the mightiest name of earth--long since mightiest in the cause of civil liberties, still mightiest in moral reformation.[13]

5. 1843--National Bank.

The national bank bill received "the sanction as President, of the immortal Washington."[14]

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[10] Works, Vol. II, p. 26.

[11] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 47.

[12] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 50.

[13] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 86.

[14] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 92.

6. 1848--Incidental Reference.

George Washington, as President, was called on to approve or reject it.[15]

These references all show a respect for Washington and for his ideas, but that is all.

The references made to Washington succeeding this date show that in the mind of Lincoln, Washington was in harmony with the democratic principles which have been designated Jeffersonian. History does not absolutely agree with Lincoln on this point. Lincoln, however, time and again connects the names of Washington and Jefferson as the great leaders of the founding of the government on democratic principles.[16] An example of this was in his debates with Douglas when at Ottawa he declared, "I am fighting it upon these 'original principles'--fighting it in the Jeffersonian, Washingtonian, and Madisonian fashion.[17] Other references to Washington do not signify that his influence was great upon Lincoln's new mode of thought except as the weight of his name added significance to the democratic principles which Lincoln thought that he whole-heartedly supported. As a verification of these conclusions all references made by Lincoln to

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[15] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 158.

[16] Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 65, 95; Vol. III, p. 150.

[17] Ibid., Vol. III, p. 150.

Washington after 1854, will be quoted:

1. 1858--Lincoln-Douglas Debate.

> I am fighting it upon these 'original principles'--fighting it in the Jeffersonian, Washingtonian, and Madisonian fashion.[18]

2, 3. 1859--Slavery Speeches.

> We (the Republicans) mean to treat you, as near as we possibly can, as Washington, Jefferson, and Madison treated you.[19]

4. 1860--Federal Control of Slavery in Federal Territory.

> Again, George Washington, another of the 'thirty-nine,' was then President of the United States, and as such approved and signed the bill, thus completing its validity as a law, and thus showing that, in his understanding, no line dividing local from Federal authority, nor anything in the Constitution, forbade the Federal Government to control as to slavery in Federal territory.[20]

5, 6. 1860--Federal Control of Slavery in Territories.

> Some of you delight to flaunt in our faces the warning aginst sectional parties given by Washington in his Farewell Address. Less than eight years before Washington gave that warning, he had, as President of the United States, approved and signed an act of Congress enforcing the prohibition of slavery in the Northwestern Territory, which act embodied the policy of the government upon that subject up to and at the very moment he penned that warning; and about one year after he penned it, he wrote Lafayette that he considered that prohibition a wise measure, expressing in the same connection his hope that we should at some time have a confederacy of free States.

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18 Works, Vol. III, p. 150.

19 Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 263; Vol. V, p. 93.

20 Ibid., Vol. V, p. 17.

. . . .Could Washington himself speak, would he cast the blame of that sectionalism upon us, who sustain his policy, or upon you who repudiate it? We respect that warning of Washington, and we commend it to you, together with his example pointing to the right application of it.[21]

7, 8. 1860--Washington an Anti-slavery Exponent.

Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances wherewith we are so industriously plied and belabored--contrivances such as groping for some middle ground between the right and the wrong; vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man; such as a policy of 'don't care' on a question about which all true men do care; such as Union appeals beseeching true Union men to yield to Disunionists, reversing the divine rule, and calling, not the sinners, but the righteous to repentance; such as invocation to Washington, imploring men to unsay what Washington said and undo what Washington did.[22]

9. 1860--Washington an Anti-slavery Exponent.

Hammond, of South Carolira, said, 'Washington set this evil example.'[23]

10. 1860--Washington Saw Conflict Between Slavery and Democracy.

There is 'the irrepressible conflict.' How they rail at Seward for that saying! They repeat it constantly; and although the proof has been thrust under their noses again and again that almost every good man since the formation of our government has uttered that same sentiment, from General Washington, who 'trusted that we should yet have a confederacy of free states,' with Jefferson, Jay, Monroe, down to the latest days. . . .[24]

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21 Works, Vol. V, pp. 28, 29, p. 71.

22 Ibid., Vol. V, p. 42, 76.

23 Ibid., Vol. V, p. 48.

24 Ibid., Vol. V, p. 65.

11. 1861--Farewell Address at Springfield, Illinois.

I now take leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington.[25]

12. 1861--A Greater Task Than Washington Had.

I cannot but know what you all know, that without a name, perhaps without a reason why I should have a name, there has fallen upon me a task such as did not rest upon the Father of His Country. . . .[26]

13. 1861--Washington's Birthday.

Allusion has been made to the fact--the interesting fact perhaps we should say--that I for the first time appear at the capital of the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania upon the birthday of the Father of his Country.[27]

14. 1861--South Against the Principles of Washington.

There are some foreshadowings on this subject. Our adversaries have adopted some declarations of independence in which unlike the good old one, penned by Jefferson, they omit the words 'all men are created equal.' Why? They have adopted a temporary national Constitution, in the preamble of which, unlike our good old one, signed by Washington, they omit 'We, the People,' and substitute, 'We, the deputies of the sovereign and independent States.'[28]

15. 1862--Proclamation Concerning Washington's Birthday.

It is recommended to the people of the United States

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[25] Works, Vol. V, p. 87.

[26] Ibid., Vol. V, p. 96.

[27] Ibid., Vol. V, p. 126.

[28] Ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 21, 22.

that they assemble in their customary places of meeting for public solemnities on the 22nd day of February instant, and celebrate the anniversary of the birth of the Father of his Country, by causing to be read to them his immortal farewell address.[29]

16. 1862--Address on Colonization to a Deputation of Colored Men.

In the American Revolutionary war sacrifices were made by men engaged in it, but they were cheered by the future. General Washington himself endured greater physical hardships than if he had remained a British subject, yet he was a happy man because he was engaged in benefiting his race, in doing something for the children of his neighbors, having none of his own.[30]

17. 1862--Order for Sabbath Observance.

'At this time of public distress'--adopting the words of Washington in 1776--'men may find enough to do in the service of God and their country without abandoning themselves to vice and immorality.' The first general order issued by the Father of his Country after the Declaration of Independence indicates the spirit in which our institutions were founded and should ever be defended. 'The general hopes and trusts that every officer and man will endeavor to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier, defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country.'[31]

It may be concluded that Lincoln did look to Washington as a guide, but certainly he was not the great influence upon Lincoln or Lincoln would have made reference to him between 1854, and 1858, or after 1862. Lincoln, for the most part, used the name of Washington

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29 Works, Vol. VI, pp. 154, 155.

30 Ibid., Vol. V, p. 168.

31 Ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 204, 205.

to add prestige to an idea to which he already held.

The influence of Alexander Hamilton upon Lincoln was almost altogether indirect. Only twice in all his writings that are available, does Lincoln speak of Hamilton. They are:

1. 1848--Incidental Mention.

> He (Washington) sought and obtained on the constitutionality question the separate written opinions of Jefferson, Hamilton, and Edmund Randolph, they then being respectively Secretary of State, Secretary of Treasury, and Attorney-General. Hamilton's opinion was for the power. . . .[32] (Lincoln opposed this)

2. 1860--Attitude towards Slavery.

> Among that sixteen were several of the most noted anti-slavery men of those times--as Dr. Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, and Gouverneur Morris,--. . .[33]

Certainly neither of these references show any influence. The distrust that Hamilton had for the common man was completely alien to Lincoln, as was Hamilton's concept of a monarchical government. Hamilton, however, had sought to establish more "energy in the administration" and "safety for the people." He declared that, "Through the opposition and mutual control of these bodies, the government will reach in its operations, the perfect balance between liberty and power."[34] Experience had proved that Hamilton was right in his desire for more

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[32] Works, Vol. II, p. 158.

[33] Ibid., Vol. V, p. 22.

[34] Alexander Hamilton, Works, Vol. I, p. 459.

energy in the administration. This added power to the central government increased through the years, and it was this principle that Lincoln used in dealing with the problem of slavery in its relationship to the Union. More discussion will be given to this in Chapter VIII, but suffice it to say here that Alexander Hamilton did indirectly influence Abraham Lincoln at this point.

The influence of John Marshall upon the new habit of thought of Abraham Lincoln was very slight. Nowhere in all his Works does Lincoln even so much as mention Marshall, and this argument of silence is the strongest possible argument. Albert J. Beveridge in his splendid biography of Lincoln seems to be mistaken in allying Marshall and Lincoln. Close study of the subject does not lead to an agreement with his idea that Marshall founded the strong central government and Lincoln saved it. There is an element of truth in this, but Beveridge's great interest in the two men[35] seems to have led him to greatly over-emphasize their agreement and to minimize their differences.

Marshall's great service to American history was to help put into effect Hamilton's idea of a stronger central government. As he was one in the line of descent of

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35 Beveridge wrote Lives of both Marshall and Lincoln.

this idea from Hamilton to Lincoln, to that degree he helped to influence Lincoln's new mode of thought.

Although as a very young man Lincoln turned from Andrew Jackson to follow Henry Clay, Jackson did have some influence upon the development of his philosophy of democracy. Lincoln never agreed to the dictatorial policies that Jackson often assumed, but he did agree to the power in the central government which Jackson displayed in time of emergency. Lincoln's exact attitude can be caught best from what he had to say about Jackson.

1. 1839--National Bank.

> We have often heretofore shown, and therefore need not in detail do so again, that a majority of the Revolutionary patriarchs, who ever acted officially upon the question, commencing with General Washington, and embracing General Jackson, the larger number of the signers of the Declaration, and of the framers of the Constitution, who were in the Congress of 1791, have decided upon their oaths that such a bank is constitutional.[36]

2. 1839--Cost of Administration.

> The last ten years under General Jackson and Mr. Van Buren cost more money than the first twenty-seven did. . . .under Washington, Adams, Jefferson and Madison.[37]

3. 1848--Internal Improvements.

> Now this is taking the subject precisely by the wrong end. Particularly--expending the money of the whole people for an object which will benefit

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36 Works, Vol. II, p. 47.

37 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 50.

only a portion of them--is the greatest real objection to improvements, and has been so held by General Jackson, Mr. Polk, and all others, I believe, till now.[38]

4. 1848--Opposition Claiming Jackson's Leadership.

But can he remember no other military coat-tail, under which a certain other party have been sheltering for near a quarter of a century? Has he no acquaintance with the ample military coat-tail of General Jackson? Does he not know that his own party have run the five last presidential races under that coat-tail? . .etc., etc.[39]

5. 1856--Against Disunion.

The Constitution provides that the President and Vice-President of the United States shall be of different States; but says nothing as to the latitude and longitude of those States. In 1828 Andrew Jackson, of Tennessee, and John C. Calhoun, of South Carolina, were elected President and Vice-President, both from slave States; but no one thought of dissolving the Union then on that account.[40]

It has been a custom to take one from a slave and the other from a free State; but the custom has not at all been uniform. In 1828 General Jackson and Mr. Calhoun, both from slave States, were placed on the same ticket. . . .[41]

6. 1857, 1858--Jackson Against the Supreme Court.

Why, this same Supreme Court once decided a national bank to be constitutional; but General Jackson, as President of the United States, disregarded the decision, and vetoed a bill for a re-charter, partly on constitutional ground declaring that each public functionary must support the Consti-

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38 Works, Vol. II, p. 164.

39 Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 167, 168.

40 Ibid., Vol. III, p. 2.

41 Ibid., Vol. III, p. 5.

tution, "as he understands it." But hear the general's own words.[42] (There are in the Works of Lincoln seven more such references, citing Jackson's action in relation to the Supreme Court's decision upon the National Bank.)[43]

7. 1860--Lincoln, an Anti-Jackson Candidate.

Returning from the campaign, and encouraged by his great popularity among his immediate neighbors, he the same year ran for the legislature, and was beaten,--his own precinct, however, casting its votes 277 for and 7 against him--and that, too, while he was an avowed Clay man, and the precinct the autumn afterward giving a majority of 115 to General Jackson over Mr. Clay.[44]

8. 1863--Lincoln Quotes Jackson's Action to Sanction His Own.

And the name of President Jackson recalls an instance of pertinent history. After the battle of New Orleans, and while the fact that the treaty of peace had been concluded was well known in the city, but before official knowledge of it had arrived, General Jackson still maintained martial or military law. Now that it could be said the war was over, the clamor against the martial law, which had existed from the first, grew more furious. Among other things, a Mr. Louaillier published a denunciatory newspaper article. General Jackson arrested him. A lawyer by the name of Morel procured the United States Judge Hall to order a write of habeas corpus to release Mr. Louaillier. General Jackson arrested both the lawyer and the judge. A Mr. Hollander ventured to say of some part of the matter that "it was a dirty trick." General Jackson arrested him. When the officer undertook to serve the write of habeas corpus, Jackson took it from him, and sent him away with a copy. Holding the judge in custody a few days, the general sent him beyond the

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42 Works, Vol. III, pp. 18, 19.

43 Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 63, 64, 92, 163; Vol. IV, pp. 70, 129.

44 Ibid., Vol. VIII, p. 218.

> limits of his encampment, and set him at liberty with an order to remain till the ratification of peace should be regularly announced, or until the British should have left the southern coast. A day or two more elapsed, the ratification of the treaty of peace was regularly announced, and the judge and others were fully liberated. A few days more and the judge called General Jackson into court and fined him $1000 for having arrested him and the others named. The general paid the fine, and then the matter rested for nearly thirty years, when Congress refunded principal and interest.[45]

When Lincoln wrote his first inaugural address he turned to Jackson's ultimatum to South Carolina to find expression of his idea of the rights and duties of the President as the servant of the Union in the time of crisis.[46] So it was that Jackson also helped to transmit to Lincoln Hamilton's idea of power in the central government.

Lincoln in his Works made but three references to Daniel Webster and none of these are important except that they show that Webster did not have any great influence upon Lincoln's thinking on the problem of slavery. These references follow:

1. 1848--Whigs in the Mexican War.

Clay and Webster each gave a son, never to be returned.[47]

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[45] Works, Vol. VII, pp. 197, 198.

[46] William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 188.

[47] Works, Vol. II, p. 177.

2. 1858--Lincoln Denies that Douglas is a Follower of Webster.

> Mr. Webster, too, was mentioned; but it did not quite come to a death-bed scene, as to him. It would be amusing, if it were not disgusting, to see how quick these compromise-breakers administer on the political effects of their dead adversaries, trumping up claims never before heard of, and dividing the assets among themselves.[48]

3. 1861--Lincoln Not Prepared to Speak.

> . . . .I did not understand when I was brought into this room that I was to be brought here to make a speech. It was not intimated to me that I was brought into the room where Daniel Webster and Henry Clay had made speeches, and where one in my position might be expected to do something worthy of myself or my audience. I therefore beg you to make allowance for the circumstances in which I have been by surprise brought before you.[49]

Daniel Webster stood with Henry Clay in the leadership of the Whig party and their names are very often found linked in the annals of history. Their principles upon the major issues were similar and it was to these principles that Lincoln turned as a young man when he joined the Whig party. By 1854, Lincoln had left these principles for much more radical ones. In 1861, however, Lincoln in preparing his first inaugural address called for Webster's reply to Hayne.[50] What was it that Abraham

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48 Works, Vol. III, p. 95.

49 Ibid., Vol. III, p. 95.

50 William H. Herndon, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 188.

Lincoln sought to find among the ideas that Webster had presented to Congress thirty-one years before?

Lincoln was not looking to Webster to supply him opinions about the relationship of slavery and democracy. He had found a better and more adequate source for that. Lincoln was not looking to Webster to supply him theories about the existence or the extension of slavery, nor about emancipation or colonization of the slaves. Webster had never had much to say about those things for he had never studied the question very deeply. Lincoln understood these subjects much better than Webster ever did.

The thought for which Lincoln did look to Webster was on the subject of slavery and its relationship to the Union. Upon this subject in 1830, in his reply to Senator Hayne of South Carolina, Webster had shown himself to be an authority. South Carolina through its representatives in Washington was asserting the supremacy of the State government to the Federal government and threatening secession. Webster on January 26 arose and answered this. His argument was:

> This leads us to inquire into the origin of this government and the source of its power. Whose agent is it? Is it the creature of the State legislatures or the creature of the people? . . . .It is, Sir, the people's Constitution, the people's government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people. The people of the United States have declared that this constitution shall be the

> supreme law. We must either admit the proposition, or dispute their authority.[51]
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> Sir, the very chief end, the main design for which the whole Constitution was framed and adopted, was to establish a government that should not be obliged to act through State opinion and State discretion. The people had had quite enough of that kind of government under the Confederation. Under that system, the legal action, the application of law to individuals, belonged exclusively to the States. Congress could only recommend, their acts were not of binding force, till the States had adopted and sanctioned them. Are we in that condition still? Are we yet at the mercy of State discretion and State construction? Sir, if we are, then in vain will be our attempt to maintain the Constitution under which we sit.[52]

"The ground which Webster took. . . .was new ground; that which Hayne occupied, old ground. But Webster's position was one towards which the greater part of the nation was steadily advancing, while Hayne's position was one which the South would presently stand quite alone in occupying."[53] Lincoln, in facing a similar crisis of secession from the Southern states, turned to Webster's reply to find the best expression of his own idea.

This concept of the supremacy of the Federal government to the State governments was not originated by Webster. He found the idea in the utterances of Alexander Hamilton and from that source accepted it with modifications. He

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[51] Daniel Webster, Works, Vol. III, p. 321.

[52] Ibid., Vol. III, p. 334.

[53] Woodrow Wilson, op. cit., p. 47.

found in Hamilton many things to be admired and was one of the first to recognize his greatness.[54] It was through Webster, therefore, that Lincoln received some of the ideas of Hamilton. In Webster, also, Lincoln found one, who like himself, hated slavery but loved the Union more and was willing to keep slavery if it would mean the preservation of the Union.[55]

The influence of Henry Clay upon Abraham Lincoln is hard to estimate. There is no doubt that up until 1849 Clay was by far the dominant influence in Lincoln's political life. As a very young man, the speeches of Clay seemed to have been the magnet which drew Lincoln into the new Whig party. As late as 1858, Lincoln would still speak of him as "my beau ideal of a statesman, the man for whom I fought all my humble life."[56]

In his Works, Lincoln makes more references to Henry Clay than to any other statesman. Many of these references indicate that Lincoln conceived of his own policy, even after 1854, as being in line with that of Clay. In a letter written in 1862, to John M. Clay, son of Henry Clay, Lincoln said, "Thanks . . . .for the

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[54] Daniel Webster, Works, Vol. I, p. 200.

[55] Ibid., Vol. V, p. 364.

[56] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. III, p. 165.

assurance that in these days of dereliction, you remain true to his principles."[57] This is but one example of the many times when Lincoln presented himself as a follower of Clay.[58] In his debates with Douglas, Lincoln a number of times endeavored to prove to the people that he was in accord with the policies of Clay. The attitude of Clay toward slavery was expressed in the Whig party. A comparison of the Whig and the Republican platforms shows how different these two utterances were on the question of slavery. Lincoln was a Republican after 1856. The statements by Lincoln that he was in perfect accord with Clay, therefore, do not seem to be absolutely accurate.

A possible explanation of the assertions of Lincoln of his closeness to Clay, lies in the fact that the majority of these came while Lincoln was running for the United States Senate against Douglas in 1858. Lincoln's chance for election depended upon the full support of his former Whig allies. To claim to be in line of succession with Clay was an appealing point to make to Clay's former followers. Lincoln was always politician enough to use such an advantage, and there was enough truth in it for

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57 Works, Vol. VII, p. 172.

58 Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 94, 166, 168, 178; Vol. IV, pp. 72, 98, 141, 132, 135, 150, 161, 162, 174; Vol. VII, p. 90; Vol. IV, p. 166.

Lincoln to make the claim. It seems likely, therefore, that the claim lay in the field of political stratagem rather than that of absolute fact.

A comparison of the attitude of Lincoln and Clay in the four major fields of slavery thought will show that some of this claim was true. This will show, however, that it was not completely true. The first field to be studied is slavery and its relationship to democracy.

Lincoln in speaking of Clay declared:

> Mr. Clay's predominant sentiment, from first to last, was a deep devotion to the cause of human liberty--a strong sympathy with the oppressed everywhere, and an ardent wish for their elevation. With him this was primary and all controlling passion. Subsidiary to this was the conduct of his whole life.[59]

This attitude was in perfect accord with Lincoln's own thinking and action on democracy. Lincoln was indelibly impressed by one of Clay's utterances upon the relationship of slavery and democracy. He twice quoted a portion of the statement[60] and ever held to the belief:

> If they would repress all tendencies toward liberty and ultimate emancipation, they must do more than put down the benevolent efforts of this society. They must go back to the era of our liberty and independence, and muzzle the cannon which thunders its annual joyous return. They must revive the slave

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59 Works, Vol. II, p. 204.

60 Works, Vol. II, p. 256; Vol. III, p. 185.

> trade, with all its train of atrocities. They must suppress the working of British philanthropy, seeking to meliorate the condition of the unfortunate West Indian slaves. They must arrest the career of South American deliverance from thraldom. They must blow out the moral lights around us, and extinguish that greatest torch of all which America presents to a benighted world, pointing the way to their rights, their liberties, and their happiness. And when they have achieved all these purposes, their work will be yet incomplete. They must penetrate the human soul, and eradicate the light of reason and the love of liberty. Then, and not till then, when universal darkness and despair prevail, can you perpetuate slavery and repress all sympathies and all human and benevolent efforts among freemen, in behalf of the unhappy portion of our race doomed to bondage.[61]

This quotation shows that Clay realized the absolute opposition of slavery to the love of liberty. Clay, however, did not look far enough in advance to see an "irrepressible conflict," and he always believed the question could be settled by compromise. He never followed through to the logical conclusion that slavery was sure to end when left face to face with its natural enemy, democracy. He saw the opposition, and Lincoln may have learned this from him, but it took Lincoln to forecast the battle, and the victory for democracy.[62] Lincoln had sunk his roots deeper into the principles of democracy and their implications than Clay ever did. In this lies their

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[61] The Life and Speeches of the Hon. Henry Clay, Vol. I, p. 527.

[62] Ibid., Vol. III, p. 38; Vol. II, p. 294.

difference on this point.

Lincoln declared of Clay, "he detested the system at heart,"[63] and this was true. Both men hated the necessity which had forced slavery upon the American people. Clay stated: "I am, Mr. President, no friend of slavery. The Searcher of all hearts knows that every pulsation of mine beats high and strong in the cause of civil liberty."[64] Lincoln expressed this same idea:

> I object to it because it assumes that there can be moral right in the enslaving of one man by another. I object to it as a dangerous dalliance for a free people--a sad evidence that, feeling prosperity, we forget right; that liberty, as a principle we have ceased to revere.[65]

What then can be said of the ideas of the two men in this primary field of slavery thinking? To a casual observer it might seem that they were close together. This, however, is not true, for they were far apart. Clay did not understand the utter antagonism of slavery to democracy and he believed they could live together. Lincoln saw an "irrepressible conflict" in which one must die.

The second field of slavery thought in which to compare Clay and Lincoln is the relationship of the exis-

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[63] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 295.

[64] The Life and Works of the Hon. Henry Clay, Vol. II, p. 375.

[65] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. II, pp. 260, 261.

tence and the extension of slavery. In this field, upon the first point the two men agreed. Clay expressed it:

> The free states have no more power or right to interfere with institutions in the slave states, confined to the exclusive jurisdiction of those states, than they would have to interfere with institutions existing in any foreign country.[66]

Lincoln expressed this same idea in his first public utterance upon slavery in 1837, as was quoted in Chapter V.[67] Lincoln never forsook this principle, but after 1854, he showed a bitter hatred toward the "necessity" which caused him to sanction the existence of slavery.

Upon the expansion of slavery Lincoln did not, after 1854, agree with Clay. Clay always sought compromises between the North and South in dealing with the expansion of slavery into new territories. Lincoln accepted this attitude until 1849, and possibly until 1854. After 1854 Lincoln set himself firmly against the expansion of slavery into new territories. In this lies the greatest difference in attitude toward slavery between Lincoln and Clay. This difference arose from a fundamental disagreement in their concept of slaves as property or as humans. Clay believed them to be property; Lincoln believed them to be men. The former declared:

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66 The Life and Works of the Hon. Henry Clay, Vol. II, p. 366.

67 Works, Vol. II, p. 27.

> That is property which the law declares to be property. Two hundred years of legislation have sanctioned and sanctified negro slaves as property. Under all the forms of government which have existed upon this continent during the long space of time under the British government--under the colonial government--under all the state constitutions and governments--and under the Federal government itself--they have been deliberately and solemnly recognized as the legitimate subjects of property.[68]

Lincoln maintained:

> Equal justice to the South, it is said, requires us to consent to the extension of slavery to new countries. That is to say, inasmuch as you do not object to my taking my hog to Nebraska, therefore I must not object to you taking your slave. Now, I admit that this is perfectly logical if there is no difference between hogs and Negroes. But while you thus require me to deny the humanity of the Negro, I wish to ask whether you of the South, yourselves, have ever been willing to do as much? . . . .In 1820, you joined the North, almost unanimously, in declaring the African slave-trade piracy, and in annexing to it the punishment of death. Why did you do this? If you did not feel that it was wrong, why did you join in providing that men should be hung for it? The practice was no more than bringing wild Negroes from Africa to such as would buy them. But you never thought of hanging men for catching and selling wild horses, wild buffaloes, or wild bears.[69]

Lincoln went on and showed that Southerners looked upon slaves as more than mere property by speaking of the disgust with which Southerners looked upon Slave-dealers. He also pointed to the fact that nearly one-half million

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[68] The Life and Works of the Hon. Henry Clay, Vol. II, p. 368.

[69] Works, Vol. II, pp. 244, 245.

Negroes were free, and said to the Southerners, "In all these cases it is your sense of justice and human sympathy continually telling you that the poor Negro has some natural right to himself. . . ."[70] Lincoln then draws his conclusion:

> If he is not a man, in that case he who is a man may as a matter of self-government do just what he pleases with him. But if the Negro is a man, is it not to that extent a total destruction of self-government to say that he, too, shall not govern himself? When the white man governs himself, that is self-government; but when he governs himself and also governs another man, that is more than self-government--that is despotism. If a Negro is a man, why then my ancient faith teaches me that "all men are created equal," and that there can be no moral right in connection with one man's making a slave of another.[71]

So upon the question of the expansion of slavery Lincoln differed radically from Clay. Lincoln knew that all men must be free and equal or a democracy could not stand. To Lincoln an inherent fundamental of democracy was that a man could not be mere property. Clay saw no danger to democracy in this property concept of the Negro, and no danger, therefore, in the extension of slavery. Lincoln saw the defeat of democracy unless slavery was circumscribed in the area where it existed then and so "placed in the line of ultimate extinction."

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[70] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 246.

[71] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 241.

The third major field of slavery thought has to do with emancipation and colonization. Neither Lincoln nor Clay believed it practical or wise to emancipate the slaves without also arranging for their colonization. The subject of colonizing the free Negroes at an early period in American history became one of profound interest. In 1800 the subject was agitated in Virginia, and a resolution was passed in the legislature of that state, asking the governor to correspond with the President of the United States, concerning the purchase of land for a colony. The President, Thomas Jefferson, unsuccessfully tried to establish such a colony in Africa or South America. Finally, in 1816, an American colony was established on the coast of Africa. On December 21 of that year, as a result of the work of Rev. Robert Finley, the friends of this cause met in Washington, D. C. to organize. The Honorable Henry Clay, then Speaker of the House of Representatives, was called to preside at this meeting. So the American Colonization Society was formed and to this Henry Clay for years, gave his interest and time as an officer and a leader.[72]

The major interest of Clay in this Society was to help the slaves already free and not to free slaves. He

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[72] The Life and Works of the Hon. Henry Clay, Vol. I, p. 515.

vigorously fought those who sought abolition and in 1839 declared, "Mr. President, it is not true, and I rejoice that it is not true, that either of the two great parties in this country has any designs or aim at abolition. I should deeply lament if it were true."[73]

Clay looked forward to a time when as the white population increased, the value of the slave labor would diminish because of the advantages of free labor. He saw this as a cause of emancipation in the future.[74] Of immediate emancipation, however, he asserted: "Now, great as I acknowledge in my opinion the evils of slavery are, they are nothing, absolutely nothing, in comparison with the far greater evils which would inevitably flow from a sudden, general, and indiscriminate emancipation."[75] He went further and said:

> But if I had been then, or were now, a citizen of any of the planting states--the southern or the southwestern states--I should have opposed, and would continue to oppose, any scheme whatever of emancipation, gradual or immediate, because of the danger of an ultimate ascendency of the black race, or of a civil contest which might terminate in the extinction of one race or the other.[76]

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[73] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 361.

[74] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 523.

[75] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 597.

[76] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 370.

The attitude of Henry Clay toward emancipation is clear. He did not object to an individual freeing slaves (Clay never did free his own), but he did not think it wise ever to consider emancipation on a large scale. However, he believed that the love of liberty would some day lead to emancipation. The colonization he sought was on a small scale and for the Negroes already free. In this way, when the love of liberty caused owners to free their slaves they would be sent back to Africa. So over a very long period emancipation and colonization would be achieved. Clay's attitude was passive and not aggressive. It was to wait and not to act.

Lincoln also believed in emancipation but he did not believe it would come without effort. His was an aggressive attitude toward the subject. He did not pretend to know an adequate method and until during the war did not consider general emancipation wise. Compensated emancipation was the plan he thought wisest. On March 6, 1862, he recommended to the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives a resolution which read:

> Resolved, that the United States ought to cooperate with any State which may adopt gradual abolition of slavery, giving pecuniary aid to be used by such States, in its discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such a change of system.[77]

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[77] Works, Vol. VI, p. 129.

In that same year Lincoln spoke of this idea of compensated emancipation, and connected with it the idea of colonization as he had done for years. In a message to Congress concerning an Act to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, he said: "I am gratified that the two principles of compensation and colonization are both recognized and practically applied in the Act."[78] Lincoln did not believe that the Negro and the white man could live in the same society with equal freedom without great contention resulting. Colonization, therefore, was the natural follow-up step of emancipation.[79]

A recapitulation shows that Lincoln and Clay agreed that Negroes who were freed should be sent out of the United States to insure peace. They disagreed, however, concerning the freeing of the Negroes. Clay believed that this would come as a natural outgrowth of economic conditions which made him unprofitable to his owner, combined with the natural impulse of liberty in the hearts of the owners. Lincoln was not willing to trust such uncertainties nor to wait for their slow development. His was an aggressive attitude and although he believed that it would be a long process, he untiringly advocated emancipation. With the

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[78] Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 132.

[79] Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 231, 232.

attitude he had, Clay could never have said what Lincoln did about the Emancipation Proclamation: "It is the central act of my administration, and the great event of the nineteenth century."[80]

It was in the fourth field of slavery thought that Lincoln agree most fully with Clay. The question of slavery in relation to the Union was one Clay had to face a number of times. In 1830, he sided with Webster and Jackson against South Carolina which threatened secession. He asserted, "The great principle which lies at the foundation of all free governments is that the majority must govern; from which there is or can be no appeal but to the sword."[81] This was an assertion of the supremacy of the Federal government over a State government. He expressed this more explicitly when he said, "it is not possible for the ingenuity of man to devise a system of state legislation to defeat the execution of the laws of the United States, which cannot be countervailed by Federal legislation."[82]

In discussing the Compromise of 1850, Clay arose and stated:

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80 Ibid., Vol. V, p. 243.

81 The Life and Works of the Hon. Henry Clay, Vol. II, p. 47.

82 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 117.

> I should deplore, as much as any man living or dead, that arms should be raised against the authority of the Union either by individuals or by St te. But. . . .if any one State, or the portion of the people of any State, choose to place themselves in military array against the government of the Union, I am for trying the strength of the government. I am for ascertaining whether we have got a government or not. . . .Nor, Sir, am I to be alarmed or dissuaded from any such course by intimations of the spilling of blood.[83]

In 1858, Lincoln startled the nation by expressing the same idea in the following way: "We will say to the Southern Disunionists, we won't go out of the Union, and you shan't."[84] In his first Inaugural Address, Lincoln returned to this idea, and his actions as President carried it out. Lincoln followed Clay, and Jackson, and Webster, and Marshall, and Hamilton, at this point.

After this comparative study of the slavery principles of Henry Clay and Abraham Lincoln what conclusions can be drawn? First: Lincoln was not in the absolute accord with Clay that he at times indicated himself to be. Secondly: upon most points Clay held a conservative attitude toward the question, and Lincoln's slavery thought before 1849, was much nearer to this than was his attitude after 1854. Thirdly: Clay may have acted

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[83] James F. Rhodes, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 190.

[84] Works, Vol. II, p. 302.

as a transmitter of some of the democratic principles from Jefferson to Lincoln, for Clay always looked upon himself as in line with the Jeffersonian principles.[85] Fourthly: upon the nationalistic concept of the Federal supremacy Lincoln followed Clay closely and at this point they both deserted, to a degree, Jeffersonian principles.

In conclusion, what then can be said of the influence of Clay upon Lincoln? How great was it? Until the year 1849, it was the greatest political influence upon Abraham Lincoln's life. After 1854, it was effective in only one field of thought.

In the key-note utterance of his new mode of thought Lincoln mentioned Clay only in the closing words and then to deny that he was breaking with his ideas on the claim that Clay never had to face that problem. If Clay had been his great guide, does it seem likely that he would have laid down his great principles without so much as referring to Clay? That is not likely.

If Clay still dominated the thinking of Lincoln, how was it that the Whig party, which was almost a personification of Clay, found its principles so inadequate to deal with the problem that it was forced into dissolution, but Lincoln with the same principles was able to

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85 The Life and Works of the Hon. Henry Clay, Vol. II, p. 479.

lead the fight? This could not have been. The truth is:

> There was a time when, holding as he did to the inherent immorality of slavery, he also believed in the compromises of Henry Clay and in the efforts of the Whig Party to deal with the slavery issue by palliative methods. But the time came when Lincoln was compelled to contemplate the career of Henry Clay with grave misgivings as to that statesman's adequate vision. Doctor Holland says that Lincoln made a visit to Henry Clay and was disillusioned. No other authority has been found for that visit, but we know that Lincoln's ardor for Clay measurably cooled.[86]

Clay did leave his mark upon Lincoln and especially in the field of slavery and its relationship to the Union, but he was not the great source of Lincoln's new dynamic.

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[86] William E. Barton, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 337.

CHAPTER VIII

THOMAS JEFFERSON, THE MAJOR SOURCE OF THE NEW MODE OF THOUGHT

Abraham Lincoln referred to the principles of Thomas Jefferson in a number of ways. He seemed to have in mind essentially the same idea whenever he used any of these. For convenience these terms have been put into three categories. Lincoln most often used the Declaration of Independence as the symbol of these concepts and in his writings after 1854, directly and indirectly spoke of it one hundred and five times. He spoke of it once before 1849. Lincoln also liked to call these doctrines the "faith of our fathers," and in that way directly and indirectly spoke of them forty times. And, of course, Lincoln called Jefferson by name in considering these ideas which he had set forth. This Lincoln did forty-seven times after 1854. This makes a total of one hundred and ninety-two references to these Jeffersonian principles following 1854, to a meager eleven references preceeding 1849. All of these have been studied closely. None of the allusions of an earlier day connected these democratic principles with the slavery problem. At that time Lincoln had not linked the two in his thinking.

In the key-note address of the new habit of thought, Lincoln alluded to these Jeffersonian principles nineteen times, and ever with the purpose of proving that he is in accord with the author of and the ideas of the Declaration of Independence.

The attitude of Abraham Lincoln toward Thomas Jefferson is obvious when he is heard to declare:

> Mr. Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, and otherwise a chief actor in the Revolution; then a delegate in Congress; afterward, twice President; who was and is, and perhaps will continue to be, the most distinguished politician of our history. . . .[1]

There can be no doubt where to place Lincoln in the history of thought after such statements as, "I am fighting it upon these 'original principles'--fighting it in the Jeffersonian, Washingtonian, and Madisonian fashion."[2] If doubt remains after such a statement as that, it must vanish under the evidence of a letter which Lincoln in 1859, wrote to the Boston Democrats, who had invited him to speak to them on Jefferson's birthday. After expressing his appreciation, and regrets that he could not attend, Lincoln added some remarks about Jefferson and the Democratic party which claimed him as their founder. He said of them that they "have nearly ceased

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[1] Works, Vol. II, p. 221.

[2] Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 150, 151.

to breathe his name everywhere," and added:

> Remembering, too, that the Jefferson party was formed upon its supposed superior devotion to the personal rights of men, holding the rights of property to be secondary only, and greatly inferior, and assuming that the so-called Democracy of today are the Jefferson, and their opponents the anti-Jefferson party, it will be equally interesting to note how completely the two have changed hands as to the principle upon which they were originally supposed to be divided. The Democracy of today holds the liberty of one man to be absolutely nothing, when in conflict with another man's right of property; republicans, on the contrary, are for both the man and the dollar, but in the case of conflict the man before the dollar.[3]

Lincoln continued by telling of two drunken men who in a fight swapped coats, and compared the two parties to the two men. Then followed a long paragraph which clearly shows that Lincoln looked upon himself as an heir of Jefferson's thought.

> But. . . .it is now no child's play to save the principles of Jefferson from total overthrow in this nation. One would state with great confidence that he could convince any sane child that the simpler proposition of Euclid are true; but nevertheless he would fail, utterly, with one who should deny the definitions and axioms. The principles of Jefferson are the definition and axioms of free society. And yet they are denied and evaded, with no small show of success. One dashingly calls them "glittering generalities," another bluntly calls them "self-evident lies." And others insidiously argue that they apply to "superior races." These expressions, differing in form, are identical in object and effect--the supplanting the principles of free government and resting those of classification, caste,

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[3] Ibid., Vol. IX, pp. 37, 38.

> and legitimacy. They would delight a convocation of crowned heads plotting against the people. They are the vanguard, the miners, the sappers of returning despotism. We must repulse them, or they will subjugate us. This is a world of compensation; and he who would be no slave must consent to have no slave. Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves, and under a just God, cannot long retain it. All honor to Jefferson--to the man, who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times, and so to embalm it there that today and all coming days it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling-block to the very harbingers of re-appearing tyranny and oppression.[4]

Another definite statement, which demonstrates Lincoln's alignment with Jefferson and his realization of this closeness, was made by Lincoln at Columbus, Ohio, on September 16, 1859. In speaking of Stephen A. Douglas, he said:

> He ought to remember that there was once in this country a man by the name of Thomas Jefferson supposed to be a Democrat--a man whose principles and policy are not very prevalent among Democrats today, it is true; but that man did not take exactly this view of the insignificance of the element of slavery which our friend Judge Douglas does. In contemplation of this thing, we all know he was led to exclaim, "I tremble for my country when I remember that God is just."[5]

Then Lincoln turned to the people and said, "Choose ye between Jefferson and Douglas as to what is the true

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[4] Ibid., Vol. IX, pp. 38, 39.

[5] Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 216.

view of this element among us."[6]

From these quotations it is obvious that Lincoln considered himself to be the spiritual heir of Jefferson. But these are not the only times such a belief is expressed. Each time that Lincoln spoke of the "Fathers of our Republic," he had in mind the men who followed after the principles of Jefferson as laid down in the Declaration of Independence. Lincoln, directly and indirectly, spoke of these "fathers" forty times after 1854; never before 1849. He sought to restore the government to the policy of the fathers; to accept slavery only because of the argument of the fathers, "necessity;" and to put it in the course of ultimate extinction, "where our fathers placed it." Even with his faith in the policy of the fathers, Lincoln was too independent in his thinking to accept all of their beliefs unquestioned.

> I do not mean to say we are bound to follow implicitly in whatever our fathers did. To do so would be to discard all the lights of current experience--to reject all progress, all improvement. What I do say is that if we would supplant the opinions and policy of our fathers in any case we should do so upon evidence so conclusive, and argument so clear, that even their great authority, fairly considered and weighed, cannot stand.[7]

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., Vol. V, p. 25.

But having made allowance for independent thought, he added that in relation to slavery, "they understood the question better than we," and so we should follow them. This to Lincoln was another way of saying that the guide in the slavery crisis was the Democratic principles of Thomas Jefferson.

The third way in which Lincoln spoke of these principles was to refer to their expression found in the Declaration of Independence. Herndon asserts that the Declaration of Independence was Lincoln's "greatest inspiration."[8] Herndon was right, for the principles which found expression there were his great guide and inspiration. He spoke of this document one hundred and five times after 1854, and each time in alignment with himself and against slavery. He once spoke of the original draft of the Declaration and its denunciation of slavery, and believed that it proved that the Declaration was absolutely opposed to slavery.[9]

It may be said in conclusion that from the numerous references to Jefferson by Lincoln and the significance of these references that it is certain that Lincoln looked to Jefferson as the source of his thought

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[8] Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 77.

[9] Works, Vol. II, p. 255.

on the slavery problem. Neither can there be any doubt that in the mind of Lincoln the Declaration of Independence was an expression of these principles, and that they were the faith of the "Revolutionary Fathers." However, the opinion of Abraham Lincoln alone will not be accepted as sufficient evidence to substantiate this contention, and added to this will be a comparative study of the beliefs of Lincoln and Jefferson upon the four major fields of slavery thought.

I. The Relationship of Slavery and Democracy

It is in this field that the closest similarity in thought between Lincoln and Jefferson exists. It is a mistake to think that any great man in the realm of reason accepted all of his ideas completely from another source. So it would be a fallacy to claim that Lincoln was in perfect accord with Jefferson even in this field. The similarity, however, is too close to be accidental. Their fundamental ideas are the same. Since this is true, and since this is the most important field of slavery thought as it acts somewhat as a foundation for the thought in the other fields, more attention will be given to it than to any other field.

The comparison will be made by giving first Jefferson's concept of democracy and then his concept of slavery. Then will be given the relationship he saw

between the two, and how he was able to reconcile the one with the other. The second section will present Lincoln's opinion of both slavery and democracy, and then show the relationship of the two in his thought.

Jefferson's concept of democracy was based upon one fact, his absolute faith in the ordinary man. It is not difficult to see the source whence this faith came. It was born in his western surroundings and nurtured by his frontier neighbors. He loved and trusted these men of the frontier who were democratic by necessity as well as by nature. He represented them when he made his entrée in politics, and from that time on he was the great prophet of American democracy. That he founded democracy, however, is a foolish claim for there always has been and always will be a spirit of liberty in the heart of man. But he did unite into an organization the democratic impulses of those Americans who, having tasted some freedom, longed for more, and he proved to be the first great American leader and organizer of democracy.

Jefferson's faith in democracy was increased and his ideas undergirded by the writings of Locke.[10] The immense influence of Locke is discernible in the Declaration of Independence, the most notable literary

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10 The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. V, p. 173; Vol. IX, p. 71, 296.

production of Thomas Jefferson, for in both words and phrases his saturation in the writings of Locke is disclosed In this declaration the best and most concise statement of Jefferson's concept of Democracy is to be found. On July 1, 1776, Jefferson wrote to William Fleming, "If any doubt has arisen as to me, my country will have my political creed in the form of a "Declaration" etc., which I was lately directed to draw.[11] Jefferson never changed this political creed and the first two paragraphs of his draft of the Declaration carry his faith.

> When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.
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> We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with inherent and inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men deriving their powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem

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11 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 41.

most likely to effect their happiness.[12]

The fundamental postulate of this is a belief in the latent honesty and ability of the average man regardless of his wealth, education, or social position. Jefferson was not deceived into thinking that the voice of the majority would always be the voice of God, but he did believe that man under proper conditions was a rational and conscientious creature capable of self-government. His faith in that was so strong that in his first Inaugural Address, he declared, "If there be any among us who wish to dissolve this Union, or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed, as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it."[13]

Jefferson was never so foolish as to claim that all men are equal in every respect. To the conservative, John Adams, he wrote:

> For I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents. Formerly, bodily powers gave place among the aristoi. But since the invention of gun powder has armed the weak as well as the strong with missile death, bodily strength, like beauty, good humor, politeness and other accomplishments, has become but an auxiliary ground for distinction. There is also an artificial aristocracy, founded on wealth and birth, without

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[12] Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 42, 43, 44.

[13] Ibid., Vol. VIII, p. 3.

> either virtue or talents; for with these it would belong to the first class. The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction the trusts, and government of society. And, indeed, it would have been inconsistent in creation to have formed a man for the social state, and not to have provided virtue and wisdom enough to manage the conceive of the society. May we not even say, that that form of government is best which provides the most effectually for a pure selection of the natural aristoi into the office of government? The artificial aristocracy is a mischievous ingredient in government, and provision should be made to prevent its ascendancy.[14]

So with this distinction in mind, Jefferson continually fought to take government from the hands of the artificial aristocrats and to put it under those who were aristocrats by the gift of nature. But tyrants he would not tolerate in either, for his actions obeyed the vow he had made when he declared, "I have sworn upon the alter of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."[15]

Thomas Jefferson although a slave-holder looked upon African slavery as one of the worst forms of tyranny. He opposed it all of his life and although he failed to eradicate the evil, his opposition never wavered, and he never doubted the ultimate extinction of it. "Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free," he wrote in his "Autobiography."

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[14] Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 425.

[15] Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 460.

A little later, referring to his opposition as expressed in "Notes on Virginia," he expressed the desire that the young college men might possess these "Notes," for it was to them he looked with hope in the fight against this tyranny. Added to these expressions of opposition to slavery, there stands in the handwriting of Thomas Jefferson among the archives of the Nation, the Ordinance of the Western Territory, prohibiting slavery from any state that might be carved therefrom after the year 1800.

The first great expression of his hatred of slavery was written by Jefferson in his first draft of the Declaration of Independence.

> He (the King) has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of distant people, who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the Christian King of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where men should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce: and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished dye, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he had deprived them by murdering the people upon whom he also obtruded them: thus paying off former crime committed against the liberties of one people, with crimes which he urged them to commit against the lives of another.[16]

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16 Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 52, 53.

Such an indictment could arise only from the lips of one who felt very powerfully the evil of slavery. Thomas Jefferson did. The best expression of this antagonism to slavery, was offered by Jefferson in his "Notes on Virginia," which he wrote for private rather than public benefit, and so fully stated this position. The full quotation is worthy of repetition.

> The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submission on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. For his cradle to his grave he is learning to do what he sees others do. If a parent could find no motive either in his philanthropy or his self-love, for restraining the intemperance of passion toward his slave, it should always be a sufficient one that his child is present. But generally it is not sufficient. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to the worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undeprived by such circumstances. And with what execrations should the statesman be loaded, who permitting one-half of the citizens thus to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots, and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one part, and the <u>amor patriae</u> of the other. For if a slave can have a country in this world, it must be any other in preference to that in which he is born to live and labor for another, in which he must lock up the faculties of his nature, contribute as far as depends on his individual endeavors to the evanishment of the human race, or entail his own miserable condition on the endless gen-

> erations proceeding from him. With the morals of the people, their industry also is destroyed. For in a warm climate, no man will labor for himself who can make another labor for him. This is so true, that of the proprietors of slaves a very small proportion, indeed, are ever seen to labor. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep forever: that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with such a contest.--But it is impossible to be temperate and to pursue this subject through the various considerations of policy, of morals, of history natural and civil. We must be contented to hope they will force their way into everyone's mind. I think a change already perceptible, since the origin of the present revolution. The spirit of the master is abating, that of the slave rising from the dust, his condition nullifying, the way I hope preparing, under the auspices of heaven, for a total emancipation, and that this is disposed, in the order of events, to be with the consent of the masters, rather than by their extirpation.[17]

Jefferson never changed these views of slavery. In 1814, he spoke of his expression of his ideas of an earlier day, and declared, "my idea on the subject of slavery of Negroes has long since been in possession of the public, and time has only served to give it stronger roots."[18]

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[17] Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 266, 267, 268.

[18] Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 477.

The question now arises, how did Jefferson reconcile his attitude toward slavery with his possession of slaves? The answer is given by him in a letter to Edward Coles, who hating the institution had threatened to abandon both his property and his country.

> My opinion has ever been that, until more can be done for them, we should endeavor, with those whom fortune has thrown on our hands, to feed and clothe them well, protect them from all ill usage, require such reasonable labor only as is performed voluntarily by freemen, and be led by no repugnancies to abdicate them, and our duties to them. The laws do not permit us to turn them loose, if that were for their good; and to commute them for other property is to commit them to those whose usage of them we cannot control.[19]

This explanation of the seeming inconsistency in Jefferson's slavery thinking and action, is also the first principle of his idea of the relationship of democracy and slavery. He saw that the two were as opposite as God and Mammon, but he believed that slavery should be endured until its opposition found lodgment in the heart of the majority of the people. He thought this would come through soft, but steady inculcation of this idea into the minds and hearts of humanity.

Jefferson's great faith in democracy was transferred to an equal faith in the downfall of this opponent of democracy. In speaking of it, he proclaimed, "It is

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[19] Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 478.

an encouraging observation that no good measure was ever proposed, which, if duly pursued, failed to prevail in the end."[20] He had no doubt that slavery was doomed and in the end democracy would prevail.

So as a resumé of Jefferson's application of the principles of democracy to slavery, it may be said, first that he saw them in absolute opposition; second, that he was convinced that when left to fight slavery would be ousted by democracy; and third, that this would and should come only after it had found the approval of the people.

Leaving Jefferson and turning to Lincoln, a study will now be made of his ideas of democracy and of slavery and of their relationship one to the other. The object of this will be to show that he was a disciple of Jefferson on all of these points.

On February 22, 1861, Abraham Lincoln stood in Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and asserted:

> I can say. . ., sir, that all the political sentiments I entertain have been drawn, so far as I have been able to draw them, from the sentiments which originated in and were given to the world from this hall. I have never had a feeling politically, that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence.[21]

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[20] Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 479.

[21] Works, Vol. V, p. 121.

This is but one of a multitude of examples showing that Lincoln looked to the Declaration of Independence as an expression of his idea of Democracy.[22] The day before he had declared in equally fervent tones, "All my political warfare has been in favor of the teachings that came forth from these sacred walls. May my right hand forget its cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if ever I prove false to those teachings."[23] A study of Lincoln shows that he did not prove false to those teachings.

Lincoln maintained that "all men are created equal with certain inalienable rights." Whether these rights were oppressed by a despot in the form of a king, moneyed powers, or a slave-holder, it was to Lincoln still a despot, and an enemy to be fought. He was not disobedient to the spirit of the Declaration in its teaching on man.

Faith in the will of the people was a second teaching of the Declaration. Was Lincoln true to this precept? Who can doubt that he was when he is heard to say, "Public opinion in this country is everything."[24] "If the Almighty Ruler of Nations, with his eternal truth and justice, be on your side of the North, or on yours of

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[22] A few of the outstanding statements of this idea are to be found in the Works, Vol. II, pp. 282, 301; Vol. III, pp. 24, 25, 69, 70, 71, 96, 126, 127.

[23] Works, Vol. V, p. 120.

[24] Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 239.

the South, that truth and that justice will surely prevail by the judgment of this great tribunal of the American people."[25] These are but examples of an idea that permeated his thought on democracy and found expression time and again.[26]

Very closely akin to his faith in the will of the people was that other democratic principle (in the mind of Lincoln,) faith in the ultimate victory of the right. "Stand by your principles, stand by your guns, and victory, complete and permanent, is sure at the last,"[27] he believed. This, too, was a major premise of the Declaration of Independence.

It may be said, therefore, that Lincoln's concept of democracy was a child of the parent he claimed for it, the Declaration of Independence.

Next to be examined is Lincoln's attitude toward slavery. So much as already been said on this point that it would be a mere repetition to quote him in detail at this point. He was opposed to it because it was against the free principles of the American government; he was

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[25] Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 239.

[26] Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 214, 215, 231, 232; Vol. III, pp. 52, 53, 59; Vol. IV, pp. 208, 246; Vol. V, pp. 44, 127, 144, 184.

[27] Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 201.

opposed to it because it was founded on human greed and opposed to human nature; he was opposed to it because it was so manifestly unjust to the slave himself; he was opposed to it because it threatened the "white man's charter of freedom." Every one of these arguments can be found in Jefferson's protest against negro slavery. Lincoln had a great deal more to say on the subject than did Jefferson, but their opposition rested on the same reasons.

When Lincoln turned and placed the Declaration of Independece beside slavery he found that, "These principles cannot stand together. They are as opposite as God and Mammon; and whoever hold to the one must despise the other."[28] He found that the equality claimed for man in the one was absolutely contradicted in the other. He saw in one the overthrow of a tyrant, in the other an ever-growing despotism. But grow as it would, his faith remained firm that this despotism, too, would be overthrown as soon as the battle was carried into the realm of principles. For the present slavery must of necessity be allowed to stand in respect to the public opinion in the South, but it cannot stand against the principles of democracy and of humanity. "We have temporized with it from the necessities of our condition;

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[28] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 263.

but as sure as God reigns and school children read, that black foul lie can never be consecrated into God's Hallowed Truth."[29]

In summation of this section it may be stated that Abraham Lincoln accepted Thomas Jefferson's concept of democracy as stated in the Declaration of Independence, and saw in slavery its natural enemy. Both, however, tempered their own feelings and desires to await that time when the public opinion would accept their view and this hated enemy of the American government could be demolished. Neither doubted the ultimate victory of their cause, and both looked forward to that day when democracy should cast slavery from its throne and should reign unopposed over the people of America.

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[29] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 284.

II. The Existence of Slavery and the Expansion of Slavery

Thomas Jefferson made a clear cut distinction between the existence of slavery and the expansion of it. The one he tolerated as a necessity; the other he fought as an evil.

In spite of his hatred of this contradiction of democracy, Jefferson felt that it would be unconstitutional to interfere with slavery within the states where it already existed, without the consent of the state. In one of the last letters he ever wrote, only three months before his death, he stated this conviction.[30] Any other concept would have been a contradiction to his principle of the sovereignty of the people. Slavery existed, and it would be wrong to prohibit it until the people of the state so desired. It must be tolerated through this necessity. This, however, did not keep Jefferson from loathing this inhuman practice and to seek to stop its spread. He was "the only powerful statesman of his day in America who was willing to risk political fortune and social favor in an active effort to remove this dark blot from the institutions of his native land."[31]

The first outstanding action of Jefferson to

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[30] The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. X, p. 385.

[31] Francis W. Hirst, op. cit., p. 124.

limit slavery was the paragraph already quoted from his first draft of the Declaration of Independence in which he condemned the British Monarch for his "cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty." This was not a direct attempt to limit slavery, but such a stigma affixed to this infamous traffic in the charter of American rights, would have been a powerful instrument in the hand of those, who, like Jefferson, felt that this trade must be stopped and this evil eradicated both in justice to the Negro and to insure the future happiness and peace of the white man.

The next important attempt made by Jefferson to stay the extension of this violation of human rights was in 1783, when he proposed a new Constitution for the State of Virginia. Within this document the following article appeared, ". . . .Nor to permit the introduction of any more slaves to reside in this state, or the continuance of slavery beyond the generation which shall be living on the thirty-first day of December, one thousand eight hundred; all persons born after that day being hereby declared free."[32] Of course, his primary interest in this was emancipation and it will be noted in the next

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[32] The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. III, p. 325.

section of this chapter, but he sought the first step of this emancipation through limitation.

It was one year later on March 1, 1784, that Jefferson's greatest effort to stop the extension of slavery was made. It was found in the "Report on Governmen for Western Territory," and stated: "That after the year 1800 of the Christian era, there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in any of the said states, otherwise than in punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted to have been personally guilty."[33] This proposal was defeated by one vote, a vote that eventually led to the Civil War, for had this been adopted as Jefferson proposed it, slavery would have died a natural death, and secession would have been impossible. This plan involved not only the states of the Northwestern territory which in 1787, did come under such an ordinance, but also all of the Western territory including the Southern section which was in time divided into Southern states.

In 1806, again the voice of Jefferson was heard in a cry to stop the spread of human bondage. Early in the legislative history of the government a compromise had been reached whereby Congress could not prohibit

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[33] Ibid., Vol. III, p. 409.

the slave trade until 1808, and so when this time was a year and a month away, the President, Thomas Jefferson, in his annual message to Congress declared:

> I congratulate you, fellow-citizens, on the approach of the period at which you may interpose your authority constitutionally to withdraw the citizens of the United States from all further participation in those violations of human rights which have been so long continued on the unoffending inhabitants of Africa, and which the morality, the reputation, and the best interests of our country, have long been eager to proscribe. Although no law you may pass can take prohibitory effect till the first day of the year one thousand eight hundred and eight, yet the intervening period is not too long to prevent by timely notice, expeditions which cannot be completed before that day.[34]

A struggle for the limitation of slavery caused a national convulsion in 1819, when Tallmadge of New York offered an amendment to the bill concerning the entrance of Missouri as a state into the Union. This amendment provided that "the further introduction of slavery should be prohibited, and that all children born in the state after its admission into the Union should be free at the age of twenty-five."[35]

This contention arising from this discussion filled the aged Jefferson with sickening sorrow. To John Adams, he wrote, "But the Missouri Question is a breaker on which

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[34] Ibid., Vol. VIII, pp. 492, 493.

[35] James F. Rhodes, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 30.

we lose the Missouri country by revolt, and what more, God only knows. From the battle of Bunker Hill to the Treaty of Paris, we never had so ominous a question."[36] To Hugh Nelson he added, "In the gloomiest moment of the revolutionary war I never had any apprehension equal to what I feel from this source."[37] The longest and fullest expression by Jefferson of his attitude toward this danger was written to John Holmes.

> I had for a long time ceased to read newspaper, or pay any attention to public affairs, confident they were in good hands, and content to be a passenger in our bark to the shore from which I am not distant. But this momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union. It is hushed, indeed, for the moment. But this is a reprieve only, not a final sentence. A geographical line, coinciding with a marked principle, moral and political, once conceived and held up to the angry passions of men, will never be obliterated; and every new irritation will mark it deeper and deeper. I can say with conscious truth, that there is not a man on earth who would sacrifice more than I would to relieve us from this heavy reproach, in any practicable way. The cession of that kind of property, for so it is misnamed, is a bagatelle which would not cost me a second thought, if, in that way, a general emancipation and expatriation could be effected; and gradually, and with due sacrifices, I think it might be. But as it is, we have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other. Of one thing I am certain, that as the passage of slaves from one State to another, would not make a slave of a

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36 The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. X, pp. 151, 152.

37 Ibid., Vol. X, p. 156.

> single human being who would not be so without it, so their diffusion over a greater suface would make them individually happier, and proportionally facilitate the accomplishment of their emancipation, by dividing the burden on a greater number of coadjutors. An abstinence, too, from this act of power would remove the jealousy excited by the undertaking of Congress to regulate the condition of the different description of men composing a State.[38]

This was the only time in Jefferson's life when he did not stand absolutely opposed to the extension of slavery, and this time he chose the lesser of two evils. for he saw the dissolution of the Union in opposition to extension. Jefferson hated not slavery less, but loved the Union more.

Abraham Lincoln in the key-note speech to his new mode of thought declared: "I want to make and keep the distinction between the existing institution and the extension of it, as broad and so clear that no honest man can misunderstand me, and no dishonest one successfully contradict me."[39] This he always did, and unhesitatingly admitted, "We have no power as citizens of the free States, or in our federal capacity as members of the Federal Union through the general government, to disturb slavery in the States where it exists."[40] In following

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[38] Ibid., Vol. X, pp. 157, 158.

[39] Works, Vol. II, p. 220.

[40] Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 174.

these principles, he maintained that he was in perfect accord with the idea of the "Fathers."[41]

In 1854, Lincoln was violently shaken by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise as has been noted. It was not a question of the continued existence of slavery in the States where it was already established, but the problem of extending it into territories of the United States that aroused Lincoln. It was upon this field that he stood and fought his great battle, for it was at this place he saw the greatest danger to democracy, "Can we as a nation continue together permanently, forever, half-slave and half-free? The problem is too mighty for me--may God, in his mercy, superintend the solution."[42] So wrote he to his friend George Roberson in 1855.

Three years later, Lincoln had reached a conclusion upon this question, and so he stood and declared:

> A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved--I do not expect the house to fall--but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other.[43]

This idea was not agreeable to Lincoln and yet he

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41 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 289; Vol. IV, p. 263.

42 Ibid., Vol. III, p. 36.

43 Ibid., Vol. III, p. 36.

knew it to be true and endangered his whole career by stating it. His friend and political allies tried to make him omit this section from his address, but he was determined to express it for he believed that even "though I fall early in the contest, it is nothing if I shall have contributed, in the least degree, to the final rightful result."[44]

Lincoln saw in the policy of the Nebraska bill, which repealed the Missouri Compromise, "a new era being introduced in the history of the republic, which tended to the spread and perpetuation of slavery."[45] He believed that the object of those who backed the Nebraska bill was to nationalize slavery, and that the second point in this direction was gained when James Buchanan was elected President in 1856. The third great step in this direction, according to Lincoln, was attained when the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that the Negro, Dred Scott, was still a slave and did not have the status of a citizen even though he had resided in a free state. The interpretation given by the Supreme Court was that the Constitution looked upon the Negro as property and not persons.[46]

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[44] Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 138.

[45] Ibid., Vol. III, p. 216.

[46] Woodrow Wilson, op. cit., pp. 197, 198.

The fourth and final step toward this nationalization, Lincoln believed would soon follow. "Put this and that together," he said, "and we have another nice little niche, which we may, ere long, see filled with another Supreme Court decision declaring that the Constitution of the United States does not permit a State to exclude slavery from its limits."[47]

Lincoln vehemently denied the decision of the Supreme Court on the Dred Scott case. He did not accept the idea that slaves were property just as cattle or horses.[48] He maintained that if such was the case, no state had a right to prohibit slavery within its borders.[49] He believed slaves to be human beings and that "the opening of new countries to slavery tends to the perpetuation of the institution, and so does keep man in slavery who would otherwise be free."[50] He added:

> Because we think it wrong, we propose a course of policy that shall deal with it as a wrong. . . .We insist on the policy that shall restrict it to its present limits. We don't suppose that in doing this we violate anything due to the actual presence of the institution, or anything due to the Constitutional guaranties thrown around it.[51]

By limiting slavery, Lincoln believed that it

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[47] Works, Vol. III, pp. 43, 44.

[48] Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 27, 28, 60, 61.

[49] Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 68.

[50] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 244.

[51] Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 99, 100.

was placed in the line of ultimate extinction. He was not sanguine in his outlook for its early ending but he did believe it would come.

> I do not suppose that in the most peaceful way ultimate extinction would occur in less than a hundred years at least; but that it will occur in the best way for both races, in God's own time, I have no doubt.[52]

Douglas attacked Lincoln claiming that in his idea of the Federal Government stopping the extension of slavery in the territories he was breaking with the faith of the Fathers of the Nation. Lincoln denied this accusation and contended that in his attitude, "I only mean to say that they will place it (slavery) where the founders of this government originally placed it"--in the course of ultimate extinction.[53] To prove his contentions that he was in agreement with the "Fathers," Lincoln delivered the "Cooper Union Address," in which he traced the votes of twenty-one of the thirty-nine fathers who signed the Constitution, clearly showing that they stood for the limitation of slavery in the territories of the United States, and that many of the others likely held the same view.[54] At another time he quoted Thomas Jefferson at length to show his efforts to stay the spread of slavery,[55]

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[52] Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 28.
[53] Ibid., Vol. III, p. 58.
[54] Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 22, 23.
[55] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 221.

and that his attitude was just the same as Jefferson's had been.

In his attack upon the spread of slavery, Lincoln felt the full support of the Fathers and especially Jefferson. From the survey of the attitude of the two men toward the existence and the extension of slavery, it may be said that Lincoln was right, for he was in full accord with Jefferson in his desire to stop the spread of slavery except at one point. Jefferson as an old man had stated that he saw no added danger in allowing slaves to be taken into Missouri. Love for the Union caused him to be willing to retreat at this point. Lincoln, in looking at the same problem, saw more danger to the Union in allowing slavery to go into new states and so he opposed it. This was a disagreement in judgment rather than principle, and upon the latter the two were as one.

III. Emancipation and Colonization.

The abolition of slavery was always advocated by Thomas Jefferson. Soon after his entrance into the legislature of Virginia in 1769, he sought permission for the emancipation of slaves, which was forbidden by the King of England. This attempt was futile.[56] Five years later he had not given up the hope, and wrote:

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[56] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 440.

> The abolition of domestic slavery is the great object of desire in those colonies, where it was unhappily introduced in their infant state. But previous to the enfranchisement of the slaves we have, it is necessary to exclude all further importation from Africa; yet our repeated efforts to effect this by prohibitions, and by imposing duties which might about to a prohibition, have been hitherto defeated by His Majesty's negative. . . .That this is so shameful an abuse of a power trusted with his Majesty for other purposes and if not reformed, would call for some legal restrictions.[57]

Again in 1783, Jefferson attempted to eradicate slavery from Virginia in the proposed Constitution for the State. This stricture on slavery which provided for emancipation of all slaves living in that State in 1800, was quoted in section II, and will not be repeated, but deserved mentioning.

While a Minister for the United States to France, Jefferson was asked to join an abolition society in that country. He answered:

> I am very sensible of the honor you propose to me of becoming a member of the society for the abolition of the slave trade. You know that nobody wishes more ardently to see an abolition not only of the trade but of the condition of slavery: and certainly nobody will be more willing to encounter every sacrifice for that object. But the influence and information of the friends to this proposition in France will be far above the need of my association. I am here as a public servant, and those whom I serve having never yet been able to give their voice against this practice it is decent for me to avoid too public a demonstration of my wishes to see it abolished.[58]

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[57] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 440.

[58] Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 6, 7.

The next time the voice of Jefferson is heard speaking of emancipation it carries a more pessimistic note, not because he had lost his ardor, but because the movement seemed to be moving slowly. However, he was confident of the final outcome. This was in 1805.

> I have long since given up the expectation of any early provision for the extinguishment of slavery among us. There are many virtuous men who would make any sacrifice to effect it, many equally virtuous who persuade themselves either that the thing is not wrong, or that it cannot be remedied, and very many with whom interest is morality. The older we grow, the larger we are disposed to believe the lost party to be. But interest in really going over to the side of morality. The value of the slave is every day lessening; his burden on his master daily increasing. Interest is therefore preparing the disposition to be just; and this will be goaded from time to time by the insurrectionary spirit of the slaves. This is easily quelled in its first efforts; but from being local it will become general, and whenever it does it will rise more formidable after every defect, until we shall be forced, after dreadful scenes and sufferings to release them in their own way, which without such sufferings we might now model after our own convenience.[59]

In 1815 Jefferson again turned to this question and in a letter to David Barrow wrote that this process of emancipation was to be a long one with much preparation necessary. It would take preparation on the part of the master "against the obstacles of self-interest to an

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[59] Ibid., Vol. VIII, pp. 340, 341.

acquiescence in the rights of others." Also the slave must be trained in the habit of self-government. This was happening slowly but much more slowly than had been hoped for, but it would be achieved in the end, for "We are not in a world ungoverned by the laws and power of a superior agent. Our efforts are in His hands, and directed by it; and He will give them their effect in His own time."[60]

Jefferson was not so sanguine that he believed emancipation was a simple process which was ended with the freeing of the Negro. He knew that the question also arose, what further shall be done with them? The answer he offered to this was that they should be colonized. He always linked the two ideas in his thinking on the subject, as when he wrote:

> Nothing is more certainly written in the Book of fate than that these people are to be free. Nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government. Nature, habit, opinion has drawn indelible lines of distinction between them. It is still in our power to direct the process of emancipation and deportation peaceably and in such slow degree as that the evil will wear off insensibly, and their place <u>pari passu</u> filled up by free white laborers.[61]

Jefferson looked while President for an appropriate place to send the emancipated slaves. The choice lay between Africa and South America. He believed Africa to

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60 <u>Ibid</u>., Vol. IX, pp. 515, 516.

61 <u>Ibid</u>., Vol. I, pp. 67, 68.

be the better of the two, and especially like the British settlement at Sierra Leone because it was settled by Negroes who were former inhabitants of the Southern States.[62] In later years, however, he sought some place nearer to the shores of America where it would cost less to send the Negroes. The cost of transportation was one of the big problems in establishing colonies.

Early in his career Jefferson, in his "Notes on Virginia," promulgated his concept of emancipation and colonization. He maintained this view practically *in toto* throughout his life, and expressed it in brief form in 1820.

> My proposition would be that the holders should give up all born after a certain day, past, present, or to come; that these should be placed under the guardianship of the State, and sent at a proper age to St. Domingo. They are willing to receive them, and the shortness of the passage brings the deportation within the possible means of taxation, aided by charitable contributions. In these, I think Europe which has forced this evil on us, and the Eastern States, who have been its chief instruments of importation, would be bound to give largely. But the proceeds of the land office, if appropriated to this, would be quite sufficient.[63]

As a summation of the views of Jefferson on emancipation and colonization the following things can be said: He advocated emancipation all of his life.

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62 *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 152, 153.

63 *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 178.

He thought gradual emancipation to be the wisest method, and this could be done best by declaring all Negroes born after a certain date to be free. He believed that colonization was a necessary accompaniment of emancipation, and that the Negroes should be sent either to Africa or South America. Colonization was supported by two important factors: Justice to the Negro, and safety to the white man. This should be accomplished by taxes on the Southern States with the aid of contributions from Europe and the Northern States.

The question now in order is, Did Lincoln accept these views of the subject? In discussing Lincoln's thought on both emancipation and colonization a distinction must be made between his thought on this subject succeeding 1854 and prior to the war, and that which arose from his experience during the war. The former will be studied first.

One thing is certain, Lincoln believed himself to be in line with the ideas of Jefferson on emancipation, for in the "Cooper Union Address," he used the words of Jefferson to express his own attitude.[64]

Lincoln had been born in a border state and was more in sympathy with the dilemma of the Southerner than

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[64] Works, Vol. V, pp. 33, 34.

were the abolitionists of New England. So, although he wanted emancipation no less than they, he saw it would be wisest to free the slaves gradually. He called John Brown's attempt at insurrection foolish and wrong;[65] and he rejected Hinton J. Helper's suggested program of taxing slavery out of existence as unfair to the slave-holder.[66] There were three cardinal points in his theory of emancipation: Voluntary action by the slave owner or state; compensation of the owner, and colonization.

Upon two of these points he was in harmony with Jefferson, but in advocating compensation he accepted this to be a fairer method and a more adoptable one than the idea of Jefferson of avoiding loss to the owners by setting a date after which all children born of slave parents would be free. Again, this was a distinction in judgment rather than in attitude or principle, for upon these they agreed. They both sought emancipation by the fairest way of which they could conceive, but neither thought it wise or just to leave the free black men within the United States. Lincoln expressed this attitude: "What I would most desire would be a separation of the white and black races."[67] This was because

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65 Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 34, 35.

66 Ibid., Vol. V, p. 35.

67 Ibid., Vol. III, p. 97.

Lincoln did not agree to the equality of the two races and did not favor Negro citizenship.[68] When speaking of colonization Lincoln believed himself to be true to the teachings of Jefferson,[69] and so he was in practically every particular. So it was until 1860, that the theory of the two men on emancipation and colonization was, in principle, the same. In judgment they differed at one point.

The pressure of the Civil War began a change in the thinking of Lincoln on these subjects. The Emancipation Proclamation was a contradiction to the three cardinal points of his earlier thought. The question now arises, when did this change come about and why?

The change was not sudden, but as all of the convictions of Abraham Lincoln, it resulted from long hours of thinking on the subject. As late as April 14, 1862, the metamorphosis was not complete for in Senator Browning's Diary for that date he made the following entry:

> At night went to the President's to lay before him the bill to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. Had a talk with him. He told me he would sign the bill--but he regretted the bill had been passed in the present form--that it should have been gradual emancipation--that

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68 Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 24, 25.

69 Ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 43, 44.

> now families should at once be deprived of cooks, stable boys, etc., and they of their protectors, without any provision for them. He further told me that he would not sign the bill before Wednesday. That old Governor Wickliff had two family servants with him who were sickly, and who would not be benefited by freedom, and wanted time to remove them but could not get them out of the city until Wednesday, and that the Governor had come frankly to him and asked for time. He added to me that this was told to me in the strictest confidence.[70]

One month before this rather remarkable incident, Lincoln had sent a special message to Congress, recommending the adoption of a joint resolution: "That the United States ought to cooperate with any state which may adopt gradual abolition of slavery giving to such states pecuniary aid, to be used by such states, in its discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such change of system."[71] At this time the extreme Abolitionists were pressing their demand for an instant and sweeping proclamation of emancipation, and angrily denounced Lincoln because he would not give it. He, however, was not willing to commit himself in his own mind to the plan of freeing the slaves until he was convinced that he could not win the border states with a policy of compensated emancipation. He seemed to have been near that conviction

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[70] William E. Barton, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 131, 132.

[71] Works, Vol. VI, p. 129.

early in July of 1862, for on July 13 "he privately told Seward and Bates that he had about come to the conclusion that it was a military necessity, absolutely essential to the salvation of the nation, that we must free the slaves or be ourselves subdued."[72]

On September 13 of that year, Lincoln still pondered the wisdom of such a proclamation. He asked, "Would my word free the slaves, when I cannot even enforce the Constitution in the rebel States?"[73] He did not doubt the constitutionality of such an act, "for, as commander-in-chief of the army and navy, in time of war I suppose I have a right to take any measure which may best subdue the enemy."[74] Lincoln's conclusion was, "I have not decided against a proclamation of liberty to the slaves, but hold the matter under advisement; and I can assure you that the subject is on my mind, by day and night, more than any other. Whatever shall appear as God's will, I will do."[75]

This was after he had written the first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, and nine days later

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[72] Lord Charnwood, op. cit., p. 320.

[73] Works, Vol. V, p. 171.

[74] Ibid., Vol. V, p. 172.

[75] Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 173, 174.

on Monday, September 22, the second draft was published. This publication came right after the news of the victory of the Union forces at the battle of Antietam, when it would carry more weight. Lincoln had been awaiting such a turn of events and he afterwards said, "It is my conviction that had the proclamation been issued even six months earlier than it was, public sentiment would not have sustained it."[76] In this draft he still advocated a compensated emancipation and colonization for slaves within States not in rebellion against the United States.[77]

By June 9, 1864, Lincoln had gone further away from his early views and advocated an amendment to the Constitution to prohibit slavery throughout the Nation.[78] But still he was conservative enough to offer to allow the people in revolt one hundred days to resume their allegiance to the Union and to keep their institution. So it may be said that in the final analysis, Lincoln never moved a step beyond his earlier beliefs about emancipation and colonization except where necessity forced him to move. However, he did come to think of this Act of Emancipation as "the central act of my Administration, and the great event of the nineteenth century."[79]

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[76] Ibid., Vol. V, p. 245.

[77] Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 142.

[78] Ibid., Vol. V, p. 193.

[79] Ibid., Vol. V, p. 243.

Abraham Lincoln did follow Thomas Jefferson in his thinking in this field until the day the war forced him to go beyond. It is impossible to say what Jefferson would have done under the same circumstances but suffice it to say Lincoln never went willingly where he did not believe the spirit of Jefferson led him.

IV. Slavery and the Union

It was in this final field of slavery thought that Abraham Lincoln broke with Thomas Jefferson. This break, however, was one in method and not in the fundamental principles of democracy. Thomas Jefferson advocated the independence of the State governments as a safeguard for democracy. Abraham Lincoln advocated a strong central government for the same purpose. The aim was the same; the methods opposite. Jefferson believed that the States were the bulwark of democracy; Lincoln believed that the Union was a greater bulwark. Jefferson's philosophy was:

> But the true barriers of our liberty in this country are our State governments; and the wisest conservative power ever contrived by man, is that of which our Revolutionary and present government found us possessed. Seventeen distinct States, amalgamated into one as to their foreign concerns, but single and independent as to their internal administration, regularly organized with legislature and governor resting on the choice of the people, and enlightened by a free press, can never be so fascinated by the arts of one man, as to submit voluntarily to his

usurpation. . . . .Danger of another kind might more reasonably be apprehended from this perfect and distinct organization, civil and military, of the States; to wit, that certain States from local and occasional discontents, might attempt to secede from the Union. This is certainly possible, and would be befriended by this regular organization. But it is not probably that local discontents can spread to such an extent, as to be able to face the sound parts of so extensive a Union; and if ever they should reach the majority, they would then become the regular government, acquired the ascendency in Congress, and be able to redress their own grievances by laws peaceable and constitutionally passed.[80]

When in 1830, South Carolina threatened to secede she only was following the teachings of Jefferson on this point. When at the beginning of the Civil War the Southern States began to declare their independence of the Union they correctly quoted Jefferson as their guide for such action. Lincoln stood absolutely opposed to this Jeffersonian teaching. He had forsaken the old for a newer faith.

The most fundamental point of Lincoln's concept of the Union was that it was the vessel which held democracy and if it was shattered, democracy would sink into the dust. To him "the world's best hope depended on the continued union of these States."[81] The Union was not the most important thing, but the jewel which it held--

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[80] The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. IX, pp. 308, 309.

[81] Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. II, p. 204.

liberty--was paramount. So it was not enough merely to save the Union, but it was essential that it should be saved as "to make and keep it forever worthy of the saving,"[82] to prove that democracy when applied on a great scale had coherence enough to remain intact even against powerful forces of disintegration.

This Union, so valuable as the home of democracy, must be sustained even by force if necessary, for "only unanimous consent of all the States can dissolve this Union."[83] So if a State or a group of States seek to secede, it is the duty of those remaining to enforce the Union, for "if a minority in such a case will secede rather than acquiesce, they make a precedent which in turn will divide and ruin them; for a minority of their own will secede from them whenever a majority refuses to be controlled by such minority."[84] Lincoln's arguments to sustain these views were expressed in his first Inaugural Address.

> I hold that, in contemplation of universal law and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual. Perpetuity is implied, if not expressed in the fundamental law of all national governments. It is safe to assert that no government proper were had a provision in its organic law for its own termination.

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82 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 264.

83 Abraham Lincoln, Uncollected Letters, p. 125.

84 Abraham Lincoln, Works, Vol. V, p. 141.

> Continue to execute all the express provisions of our National Constitution, and the Union will endure forever--it being impossible to destroy it except by some action not provided for in the instrument itself.
>
> Again, if the United States be not a government proper, but an association of States, in the nature of contract merely, can it, as a contract, be peaceably unmade by less than all the parties who made it? One party to a contract may violate it--break it, so to speak; but does it not require all to lawfully rescind it?. . . . . .
>
> It follows from these views that no State upon its own mere motion can lawfully get out of the Union; that resolves and ordinances to that effect are legally void; and that acts of violence, within any state or states, against the authority of the United States, are insurrectionary or revolutionary according to circumstance.[85]

Lincoln looked with bitterness upon slavery because it threatened the Union. One of his great objections to it was at this very point. He asked:

> Has anything ever threatened the existence of this Union save and except this very institution of slavery? What is it that we hold most dear among us? Our own liberty and prosperity. What has ever threatened our liberty and prosperity save and except this institution of slavery? If this is true, how do you propose to improve the condition of things by enlarging slavery--by spreading it out and making it bigger? You may have a wen or cancer upon your person, and not be able to cut it out lest you bleed to death; but surely it is no way to cure it, to engraft it and spread it all over your whole body. That is no proper way of treating what you regard as a wrong.[86]

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85 Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 137, 138.

86 Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 117.

When during the Civil War slavery seemed to be tearing the Union to pieces, Lincoln's one thought was to save the Union regardless of what happened to slavery. To Horace Greeley, he wrote:

> I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will the "the Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save the Union by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help save the Union. I shall do less whenever I believe what I am doing hurts the Cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the Cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be the true views.[87]

So it was to the continuation of the Union that Lincoln turned every effort, and the reason he desired this continuance was the the Union contained within itself the world's hope for democracy. From what source did Lincoln reap these ideas? The answer is: from two

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[87] Ibid., Vol. VIII, pp. 44, 45.

very divergent sources--Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton.

The most fundamental element of Abraham Lincoln's thought on the Union was the principle for which Thomas Jefferson expended every energy--democracy. The method to save this Union which he accepted was absolutely opposed to Jefferson, and found its origin in his arch-enemy, Hamilton. This had come to Lincoln through the hands of Marshall, Jackson, Clay and Webster.

> In him the nationalism of Hamilton and the democracy of Jefferson were for the first time perfectly blended into one. Hamilton and Jefferson did have one principle in common. It was the great fallacy, axiomatic for them, that energy and democracy in government are by nature incompatible. Both men believed local self-government to be the bulwark of democracy. Hamilton out of his experience in Congress of the old Confederation acquired an invincible distrust of democracy. Jefferson out of his experience in bourbon, France, acquired a similar distrust of centralized government. To the former, democracy meant anarchy. To the latter, centralized government meant the infinite oppression of the humble poor. And so these two master opponents each of a great principle fought each other in Washington's cabinet and out of it like cocks in a pit. Four score years later, Lincoln took all of Hamilton's nationalism, but cleansed of his unfaith in democracy, and all of Jefferson's sublime faith in democracy, but cleansed of his prejudice against strength in the Union. Lincoln acknowledged himself in respect to this synthesis of democracy and nationalism, of liberty and Union, to be a disciple of Webster.[88]

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88 George Croft Cell, op. cit., p. 128.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Among the numerous works written on Abraham Lincoln there is none which attempts to trace the source of his slavery philosophy. The object of this dissertation has been to do that and to establish the theory that the thought of Abraham Lincoln upon the question of slavery was based primarily upon the democratic principles of Thomas Jefferson.

A study of the biographies of Lincoln reveals nine which deserve special notice. They are those by Nicolay and Hay, Herndon and Weik, Morse, Tarbell, Rothschild, Charnwood, Stephenson, Barton, and Beveridge. The most helpful in the present study were Herndon and Weik, and Beveridge, both of which give clues to the father of Lincoln's thought on slavery. However, neither of them understands or appreciates the great influence of Jefferson.

A survey of the early life of Lincoln reveals three major influences upon his later life: his home, his school, and the frontier.

From his early entrance into politics until 1849, Lincoln was an ardent Whig and clung to their views with

tenacity. During this time he had few occasions to observe slavery and although he was in principle opposed to it, his convictions on the subject were no stronger than were those of the Whig party to which he belonged.

When in 1849, Lincoln retired from Congress he was very conscious of his failure as a Congressman, and so began to study intensely. Soon the problem of slavery superseded his other studies, and as his interest grew he read not only all of the current works that were available, but also he made a historical study. In this he found the inspiration of his life from that time hence, the writings of Thomas Jefferson. So when in 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska bill repealed the Missouri Compromise, Lincoln was prepared to deal with the subject.

His attack was made in the "Peoria Speech," and this showed a changed Lincoln. This change is attested to by seven of the best writers on Lincoln; by the reaction of those about Lincoln in recognizing his new leadership; and by the statements of Lincoln himself. How extensive this change was can be understood only when it is known that in this speech Lincoln, for the first time, expressed his belief of the utter incompatibility of slavery with democracy; for the first time he expressed the conviction that slavery must die and that this was to be done by circumscribing it in the area where it then existed; for the first time he

showed such hatred to slavery that he sought to free every slave and send him out of America; and for the first time he saw the imminent threat of slavery to the Union and expressed his devotion to it when he declared that if his judgment were wrong, and if the Union could be saved only by the continuation of slavery, he would rather slavery be extended than the Union be dissolved. This was because he saw in the Union the world's hope for democracy.

This speech shows the existence of a definite slavery philosophy to which Lincoln ever afterwards adhered. Every idea he expressed on the subject after this time was checked by the necessity of being "of the people, by the people, for the people." This is the theory of government established by the Declaration of Independence, and this was Lincoln's new philosophy of slavery.

The task of tracing the minor and major influences which affected the formation of this new philosophy is difficult as references to any such influences are few. Lincoln's law partner, William Herndon, an abolitionist, likely cast to some degree the shadow of his thinking upon Lincoln. The writings of contemporary anti-slavery leaders such as William Seward, Theodore Parker, and Horace Greeley, greatly augmented Lincoln's interest in the subject. They even may have been the guide which led Lincoln back to the Declaration of Independence and to

Jefferson, but this is not a certainty.

The concept of the supremacy of the Union in Lincoln's thinking can be traced back through Clay, Webster, and Jackson to Marshall and Hamilton. Of these men Clay was the most influential upon Lincoln's thinking, and especially before 1849. Decided differences appear, however, when Lincoln's later utterances are compared with Clay's writings on slavery. Such a comparison shows that in one field only, that of the supremacy of the Union, did Lincoln follow Clay. Therefore, Clay cannot be considered the father of the slavery philosophy of Abraham Lincoln. This honor belongs to another, Thomas Jefferson.

Lincoln rejected Jefferson's method but embraced his theories, and on numerous occasions expressed his belief that he was a disciple of Jefferson. A comparison of the theories of the two on the four major points of slavery establishes this as a fact.

I. The Relationship of Slavery and Democracy

To Jefferson, democracy was a form of government by the will of the majority of the people, who because of their equality had "certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Lincoln's idea of democracy was the same as Jefferson's idea, for he sought a government by the will of the majority of the people, seeking the equality of all the

people, for the good of most of the people.

Jefferson and Lincoln both saw that slavery took away from a large number of men both liberty and equality, which are the two corner-stones of democracy. They denied the slave-holder's contention that democratic liberty gave to them the right to hold slaves, because they denied that true democratic liberty ever could take away from other men both their liberty and equality. A slave was neither free nor was he equal, therefore slavery was an absolute contradiction of democracy. Both men recognized that an irresistible conflict was inevitable when the two were left face to face.

II. The Existence and Expansion of Slavery

Jefferson was willing to accept the existence of slavery only because the Constitution forbade interference with an institution within a state, and he expended much effort in attempting to stop the spread of this great contradiction to democracy. Lincoln believed exactly the same thing about non-interference with the existing institution, and followed so closely behind Jefferson in his fight against expansion that if Jefferson had been successful, Lincoln would not have had to carry on the work.

III. Emancipation and Colonization of Slavery

Both Lincoln and Jefferson sought a method of emancipation, and each felt that emancipation must be followed

by colonization. As to the method of emancipation they disagreed, but this variance was one of judgment and not of principle, for in this field, too, they were as one.

IV. Slavery and the Union

Jefferson believed the state government should be supreme, because he believed it to be the best protection for democracy. Lincoln believed the Federal government should be paramount as it was the greatest safeguard of democracy. The essential object of both was the salvation of democracy; their methods were opposite.

So it may be concluded that Lincoln accepted the theories of Jefferson in his thinking on slavery except in the final field where Lincoln turned from Jefferson in search of a better way than Jefferson had ever found to preserve that which both held dearest and to insure "that the government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

William McFerrin Stowe was born January 28, 1913, in Franklin, Tennessee, the son of Rev. J. Joel and Myra McFerrin Stowe. His early education was in the public schools of Arkansas and Tennessee. In 1928 he entered Hendrix College, Conway, Arkansas, and was graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1932. The fall of that year he entered the School of Religion, Duke University. By 1935 he was graduated with the B. D. degree. Work on the Doctor of Philosophy degree was begun in the department of Church History, Boston University School of Theology in 1935.